

PRIMITIÆ & ULTIMA:

OR,
THE EARLY LABOURS
AND
LAST REMAINS

THAT WILL MEET THE PUBLIC EYE,

IN SEVERAL PRACTICAL DISCOURSES,
EMINENTLY CALCULATED FOR ALARMING SINNERS AND
HYPOCRITES IN ZION,

AND
AFFORDING INSTRUCTION, CORRECTION, AND CONSOLA-
TION, TO GENUINE BELIEVERS,

OF THE LATE REV. AND LEARNED
MR THOMAS BOSTON,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ETTRICK,—AUTHOR OF
THE FOURFOLD STATE, &c. &c.

Now first Published from his MANUSCRIPTS.

HEB. xi. 4.—*By it, he being dead, yet speaketh.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SERMONS.

THE FOLLY OF TURNING ASIDE FROM THE LORD *.

SERMON XLV.

1 SAM. xii. 21. *And turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.*

YE have been professing to forsake your wandering life through the empty creation, and to turn to the Lord as your portion, as your soul's rest, and as your great Lord and Master from henceforth. There is one thing of which I would persuade you, the faith of which would keep you ever with him; and this is, that if you were to change every day, you can never do better, never do so well. This is the scope of our text; in which we have Samuel's reason to the Israelites for their not turning aside from the Lord in any case;
VOL. III. A which

* Delivered at Galashiels, on Sabbath, Sept. 6. 1719.

which is, "For then should we go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain."

These words (without any supplement, and to the same sense, but more forcibly expressed) may be read word for word thus: "And ye shall not turn aside, but after vain things," &c.; that is, ye cannot turn aside, but you must, by doing so, go after vain things. The text is a defiance held out to men in their attempts to mend their condition by departing from the Lord. In which there is,

1. A case supposed, which is, That they should turn aside from the Lord; and having done so, they have the wide world to chuse upon, let them take to the right hand, or to the left, chuse the best they can pitch on, some or all, that what is wanting in one, may be made up in another. This is the utmost extent to which it can be carried.--There is,

2. The determination in this case, which is expressed in the text with all confidence. Ye shall not, ye cannot for your hearts, turn aside, but after vain things; I defy you to find out a substantial good for yourselves in the whole creation, separate from God. Betake yourselves to what you will, to idols that are so already, to other things to make idols of them, make your best of them, you shall never make more of them than vanity, they are unprofitable, empty, helpless nothings. — From this subject I take the following

DOCTRINE, That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Offer some things for explaining this point.

II. Evince the truth of this weighty point.

III.

III. Add the practical improvement.

We are then,

I. To offer some things for explaining this point.—Here I observe,

1. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of rest to his heart, and satisfaction to the desires of it: Isa. lviii. 19. 20. "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Every man's heart within him is naturally an hungry, empty thing, which must be filled from something without itself, or it cannot rest. Some, hearing of the soul's satisfaction to be had in God, come away to ordinances, and are for a time found about the Lord's hand, like the mixed multitude from Egypt among the Israelites. They do not at the very first find that satisfaction for which they look, and they cannot wait; but for haste to be filled, they go back to the world and their lusts. In this case, the more haste, the less speed, they are farther from it than ever.—I observe,

2. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of comfort and ease to his conscience: Psal. xxxii. 3. 5. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." This is the true way to get ease. But some awakened sinners seek ease

THE FOLL Y OF TURNING

by their tears, confessions, resolutions, and the like, not by the blood of Christ : but, alas ! those plasters will not stick, they will never draw out the thorn of guilt. Some divert the pain of conscience, by filling their hands and heads with business, like Cain. Some stifle it by sinning, yet more over the belly of convictions. But the sore healed with any of these, which are but mere palliatives, will break out more dreadfully than ever, though perhaps not till there is no remedy. And how is the case thus mended ? is it not ruined ? — I observe,

3. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of his interest and advantage : Jer. ii. 13. “ For my people have committed two great evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” He who changes, changes for what he accounts the better for himself ; yet men often find themselves disappointed. Nothing draws persons more away from God than interest ; but heaven shall be turned nethermost, and earth uppermost in the universe, ere any man, manage as securely as he will, shall ever be a gainer by turning aside from God. For this ye have the concurring testimony of all true penitents, whose eyes have been opened : Hos. ii. 7. “ And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them ; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them ; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.” — I observe,

4. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, will better his condition, but ruin it, in point of security from evil : Prov. xxviii. 18. “ Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved ; but he

he that is perverse in his ways, shall fall at once." Sin often promises, but can never afford a solid shelter. Any hiding-place or defence to which persons betake themselves, turning away from God, is but vanity, and cannot deliver; nay, it exposes them to the way of evil: Amos, v. 19. "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him." The Jews, in their crucifying of Christ, are a standing witness to this: John, xi. 48. "If we let him alone," said they, "all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation." Matth. xxii. 7. "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city."—We now come,

II. To evince the truth of this weighty point, That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will.—We shall do this,

First, By considering to what a person turns aside when he turns from God.

Secondly, By taking a view of what he turns aside from. And,

Thirdly, By inspecting the pretended gain which he acquires by turning aside from the Lord.

First, We are to evince the truth of this weighty point, by considering to what a person turns aside when he turns from God. It is but vanity, which cannot profit or deliver. There are but two things to which a person can turn aside, though

the particulars are numberless. The character agrees either,

1. To sin, that is, to sinful ways, courses, or practices. And while there is a God in heaven to avenge the affront, no man shall mend his condition in this way. You will not, indeed, want an invitation to turn aside, and go in at this door; but know for a certain that it will ruin you, for "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell," Prov. ix. 18. Sin is the way in which you will never find rest to your souls; on the contrary, it will produce a sting to your conscience, a constant restlessness to your heart, and eternal ruin to the whole man, if mercy recover you not, and bring you back to God.—Or the character agrees,

2. To the creature, to which, when men are turning aside from God, they turn to seek their happiness. This comprehends all created comforts whatsoever. Of them we have two things to say.

(1.) They are all uncertain, a person can never get a sure hold of them: Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Unchangeableness is an essential property of that which makes truly happy and fully satisfies, for otherwise the very fear of losing the thing mars the full rest of the heart in it. But where is this to be found but in God? The creature is so uncertain, that there is not one moment in which we may not either be taken from it, or it from us; so that a person may rest as well on the top of a wheel, as on any creature. And turning aside from God to it, is turning from the fountain to a cistern, which, in that very moment when a person goes to drink out of it, may run dry.

(2.)

(2.) They are utterly insufficient. It is not in them to answer the cravings of the human heart, of an immortal soul. Hence it is said, Isa. lv. 2. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" [1.] There is no suitableness in them to the soul, for they are not commensurate to the desires of it; God only is so, being an infinite good. Wherefore, wherever you go to make your bed among them, you will find it shorter than you can stretch yourself upon. [2.] They have no divine appointment for that end, without which grass would be no more satisfying to the flocks than sand. God has kept the satisfying of the soul to himself, as his peculiar prerogative.—Therefore the turning aside to such emptiness can never make a man happy.—Here, however, may be stated this

Objection, What! does not every body know that there is a goodness in the creature? *Answer*, But every body should likewise know that it is uncertain and insufficient, and therefore not worth the turning aside to from a good God. Besides, know this farther, that no creature can be to thee more than this God, from whom thou turnest aside, makes it to be. So thou mayest get it, and at the same time there may come a withering curse with it, that thou shalt find no more sap in it than Haman in his riches, family, honours, which, by his own confession, availed him nothing, Esther, v. 13. Yea, thy ruin may rise from it, as Achan's from the golden wedge.

Secondly, For evincing the truth of this weighty point, consider what a person turns aside from, when turning aside from God. He turns from an upmaking portion: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have

have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Cleave to the Lord, turn not aside from him : For,

1. Thou art enriched for time : 1 Tim. iv. 8. " Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The everlasting covenant secures all that thou needest. Thy provision is sure : Psal. xxxvii. 3. " Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Isa. xxxiii. 16. " He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks ; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." Thou shalt not want lodging : Psal. xc. 1. " Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Fear not want of cloathing : Matth. vi. 30. " For if God so cloathe the grafs of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more cloathe you, O ye of little faith ?" What want ye more, then ? Why, some would have land also. Then cleave to Christ as thy Lord and Husband. He is Lord of all the land in the world ; the earth shall be thine in the right of thy Husband : Mat. v. 5. " Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." But what will a person do for money ? Why, cleave to the Lord : Job, xxii. 24. 25. " Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver."—Here some may propose this

Objection, These are fine words, but what will they bring into our mouth, or on our back, what will they bring into the coffers ? *Answer*, They are God's words, and his words are better than all the world's good deeds. Some to whom God
has

has no special love; he gives them their portion in their hand, and sets them off; others, who are his dear children, he gives them the good words of a promise, and keeps them at home with himself. Say now, which of these have the best of it? The following words determine it: Matth. xxv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." God approves not of those men who say to the needy, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled; notwithstanding, *they* give them not those things which are needful to the body," Jam. ii. 16. And will He himself treat his people so? No, no. Many a saint has trusted to these words, when they had nothing else to trust to, and they have all been made out to them: Psal. xxxiv. 8. 9. "O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints! for there is no want to them that fear him." The unbeliever's mistake is, that God's bond cannot be paid, but in giving the very thing itself. Even this is often done, but he also gives his people more frequently what is as good. Moses, wanting meat forty days, had no reason to complain, when God in those days took away his stomach, and satisfied him otherwise than by meat. Adam lived well when the heavens were the roof of his house, and God was his God. And the enjoyment of God still will abundantly compensate the want of all these things.

2. Cleave unto the Lord, turn not aside from him, and thus thou art enriched for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. quoted above. Come death when it will, what then? thou shalt be carried where thy happiness shall be completed: John, xiv. 2. "In my Father's

Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you." The law cannot debar thee from this happiness, it is satisfied ; justice has nothing to say against thee, for the debt is paid : God is thy God ; and the tongue of men, nor of angels, cannot fully express this privilege.

Thirdly, The truth of this weighty point in the text will farther appear, by inspecting the pretended gain which is acquired by turning aside from the Lord. — It may all be summed up in these two particulars.

1. It is nothing : Prov. xxiii. 5. (quoted above). All the gain is but children's gain, which they have won off their fellows, of which grown persons make no account ; and as little will a spiritual heart account of gain got by turning aside from the Lord. It is a poor trade where a person is not gaining for his soul ; and no person will gain for this by turning aside from God.

2. It is worse than nothing. Whatsoever thou thinkest thou gaineest by turning aside from the Lord, a thousand times more is going to destruction in the mean time. Count what thou givest out, as well as what thou gettest in, and thou wilt soon see the gain worse than nothing : Matth. xvi. 26. " For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?"

From all which it is evident, that no man shall better his condition, but ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will. — I now proceed,

III. To make some improvement of this subject, in an use of information. — Hence,

1. You

1. You who have never yet turned to the Lord, but have been going aside from him all your days, know, that ye are yet in a ruinous condition; there is nothing you can call yours, but what is vanity, and cannot profit or deliver. Ye will not be persuaded of this; but remember it is explicitly told you; and if grace do not open your eyes to see it timely, death will open them to see it when it is out of time to mend the matter.

2. Backsliders, be all of you convinced of the foolish choice ye have made, repent, and turn again unto the Lord. What have you gained by your departures from him? Where is the advantage of the sad exchange? Blasted profits! short-lived pleasures! leaving a sting behind them in the conscience! these will not compensate for what ye have lost.

3. Ye who have got near God in this ordinance, ye may see that it is your duty and interest, by a holy tender walk, a living by faith, to hold where you are. If you step aside from God, you may well mar your case, you will never mend it this way. Entertain no curiosity to be on the other side of the hedge; satisfy yourselves that there is nothing there but vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain: Isa. xxx. 7. "For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

4. Disappointed communicants may hence be satisfied, that if you love your own souls, it is not for your profit to go aside to another door, to get your loss at the door of God's house made up another way. Your case, it is likely, is sad, and Satan will strike in with the occasion to make you a fair offer. But know of a truth, if you embrace it, instead of mending your condition, you shall make
your

your sad case yet sadder. Be peremptory in your resolutions, that you will wait upon the Lord, and not give over, how long soever ye be without sensible success: Gen. xxxii. 26. "And the angel said to Jacob, Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Go thou, and do likewise.

5. Ye carnal ones, who are weary of waiting on about the Lord's hand, and are longing to be back to the world as your element, saying in your heart, "When will the Sabbath be over?" ye may see the propriety of checking these carnal motions; stir up yourselves to seek the Lord, and to improve the present opportunity for making a happy settlement for your souls; otherwise, if ye miss such an occasion of mending your condition, ye know not if ever ye shall have it again; and by neglecting it, ye run towards the ruining of your souls.

Let all be exhorted to cleave to the Lord, and tremble at the thought of turning aside from him. Be exhorted, with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, Acts, xi. 23. Turn not aside from his precious truths, his holy ordinances, the way of holiness and tenderness in the whole of your conversation; but cleave to the Lord, his word, his way, and to whatever bears his stamp. Turn not aside, whatever may be the temptation or allurements. Know of a truth, that it is but poison presented in a golden cup to you, which will work the ruin of your condition; it is but a gilded vanity, to cheat you out of a substantial good: it is what will not fail to be bitterness in the end. Have your eyes in your head, then, and forfeit not God's favour or smiles for lying vanities.

Again, Turn not aside, whatever be the hazard of holding on. Let devils and men run that as
high

high as they will, as sure as God's word is truth, the greatest hazard is ever on the other side; and they who turn aside run the most fearful risk.—Wherefore, take it home with you, lay it up in your hearts, and improve it in your daily walk; decide all your controversies with temptation, managed by a subtle devil, a carnal heart, or the men of the world, by this,—That you cannot turn aside, but “after vain things, which cannot profit, nor deliver, for they are vain.” Amen.

VOL. III.

B

JESUS

JESUS COMPLETELY QUALIFIED
FOR HIS WORK*.

S E R M O N X L V I .

ISA. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord hath anointed me.*

THIS text is that upon which our Lord Jesus himself preached to the congregation of Nazareth, Luke, iv. 16.—19. And if ye ask of whom the prophet spake, Jesus tells you, ver. 21. that it was of him. Though the prophet perhaps had an eye to himself, and to the promised deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; yet certainly Christ, and the spiritual deliverance by him, is the principal subject. Jesus is here described as the Mediator between God and man. In the words we have two things.

1. The glorious qualifications of our Mediator :
The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. Here are the three persons of the Trinity distinguished. The Lord God, his Son, and his Spirit. Our Lord
Jesus

* Delivered Sept. 1718.

Jesus being both God and man, the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts, was put on the man Christ. At his baptism the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, Matth. iii. 16. On him also the Spirit rested, and never again departed from him, but continued filling him at all times with graces and gifts for the discharge of his great trust. So that he says the Spirit *is* upon me, not *is come* upon me. —We have,

2. The *reason* of these glorious qualifications. This was, because they were necessary for the office to which he was called : *Because the Lord God hath anointed me.* It behoved him to be both God and man. As he was God, he could have nothing added to him ; but as he was man, it behoved him to be endowed with unparalleled qualifications for this unparalleled office.—Here consider his call to the work. The Lord anointed him, as prophets, priests, and kings were wont to be, and thus were called and set apart to their respective offices ; in like manner was Christ called of the Father to the Mediatorial works, not with material oil, as they were, but with the Holy Spirit, which was signified by that oil.—Again, consider his mission : The Lord *sent* him. He did not come unsent to the world ; but his Father having called him, and furnished him for the work, sent him away to exercise his commission, and to perform his work.—Consider, next, the work he was called to, and sent out upon. Consider this work with respect to Christ himself ; and it is threefold. *First*, As a prophet or preacher of the gospel, revealing the Father's mind. *Secondly*, A priest or healer, a spiritual physician, for sin-sick souls, to bind up the broken hearted. *Thirdly*, As a king, to issue out proclamations, far more joyful than

those of Cyrus to the captives, as the spiritual captivity and imprisonment is far worse than a corporal one.—Consider the work as it respects the different sorts of people with whom he has to deal; and it is twofold. *First*, Some of them have some good in them wrought by his Spirit; and of these, some are the meek, others are broken hearted. *Secondly*, Some of them have no good in them, they are captives, prisoners to Satan. Both sorts are in his commission, as persons he has to deal with.—Consider this work as it respects the different cases of these sorts of persons; and it is fourfold. *1st*, To the meek, he has to carry good tidings. *2dly*, To the broken-hearted, he has to bind up their wounds. *3dly*, To the captives he has to give deliverance, and *4thly*, To the prisoners he has to open the prison-doors. Thus he is, by the Father's special appointment, to give suitable help to each case. A more particular explication of these things will be given as we advance in the subject.

Now, here is a great work; and because of it, (or, as it is in the Hebrew, answerable to it), he is endowed with the Spirit, with his graces and gifts, without which he could not be qualified for it.

The subject of our present discourse, is our Lord's qualification for his work: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*. Here our Lord commends himself to poor sinners, that they may come to him, and be happy in him. Who can commend him to purpose but himself? He commends himself to us, from the fulness of the Spirit lodged in him, as in Rev. iii. 1. "And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." As when the soul is gone, the body can
move

move and act no more; so where the Spirit of God is gone from men, they can do no more good. While destitute of the Spirit, they are shut up under an uninterrupted barrenness. Now, this is the natural case of the whole world. To the world, then, under the want of the Spirit, Christ here makes public proclamation, where the Spirit is to be found; as if he had said, 'O all ye spiritless, lifeless sinners, dead to grace and goodness, be it known unto you, *the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.*' He says as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9. and downwards. The Spirit came upon Moses and the prophets, but they could spare none of their oil; if they could, they could not have communicated it. But the Spirit is on *me*, as the oil in the cistern, to be dispersed by the pipes of conveyance to poor sinners who will come to me. This is indeed a proclamation of a well-stored and cheap market, to a country perishing under famine, to which they should all resort.

That this is the true intent of these words, appears, *first*, Because it is plain from the original accentuation, that the principal purpose of the text, is not to shew why the Spirit was on Christ, (for in that case the chief stop within the verse had been at broken hearted), but to shew, that the Spirit *is* on him, (for there the great stop is.) *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, &c.* *Secondly*, Because an amazing change is prophesied, in the preceding chapter, to come upon the church of the Gentiles; and so here follows the accounting for it: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*, to be communicated for effecting this change.

From this part of the subject, I observe the following

DOCTRINE, That the Spirit of God was eminent-

ly on Jesus Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.

This was typified by the ointment poured out on the head of the High Priest, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Compare John, i. 16.

For illustrating this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ the Mediator.

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit is put upon Christ to be communicated.

III. I will consider the reasonableness and suitability of this glorious device, of the Spirit's being put on Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.—And then,

IV. We shall improve the subject.—We are,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon the Mediator.—Here we observe,

1. That the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred on Christ's human nature in a singular measure: Psal. xlv. 7. "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." What these are you may see, Isa. iii. 2. 3. Others have had much of these, but never any so much of them as the man Christ, though they were not infinite, which is a property peculiar to the divine perfections. Thus his enemies were obliged to confess, that he spoke as never man spoke. And in this sense that testimony, John, iii. 34. "God giveth not his Spirit by measure unto him," may be applied even to Christ's manhood; namely, that God gives not his gifts and graces to him sparingly, as out of a measure, but with a full hand most abundantly.—We observe,

2. The fulness of the Spirit was upon the Mediator; and that is an infinite fulness, for he is
God

God as well as man: Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Holy Spirit is an infinite Spirit of boundless perfections, all which Jesus Christ as God doth fully possess. The divine nature, an unfathomable depth of perfections, was united to the human nature in our Mediator; so that he has not only a portion of the Spirit, but the whole fulness of the Spirit, John, iii. 34. Saints have, and can have, but their measure; but the ocean of perfections, which knows no bounds, and all grace, were and was in him.—We observe,

3. That the Spirit was at all times alike on the Mediator. The Spirit came sometimes on the prophets, instructing them what to say, and exciting them to say it; but sometimes the spirit of prophecy did not blow, they had it not at their command: 1 Peter, i. 21. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." See an instance, 2 Sam. vii. 2.—5. where the prophet Nathan knew not how to direct David, till the word of the Lord came to him. So the Spirit of sanctification in the saints, though he never departs from them, yet how often is there a dead calm in their souls, which requires them to say, as in Song, iv. 26. "Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." But the Spirit rested on Jesus Christ, Isa. xi. 2; it dwelleth in him, Col. ii. 9. He never can be at a loss for want of the Spirit, whose waters in him are never shallow, but still continue alike deep.—We observe,

4. That the Spirit is upon him in the fulness of a fountain, to be communicated to those who come to

to him : Zech. xiii. 1. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness : So "Jesus breathed on his disciples," John, xx. 22. and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." All others, even the saints in heaven, have but the fulness of a vessel, what only may serve themselves. But he has the fulness of a spring, where the waters are ever flowing, and therefore can furnish all others who come to him, and yet have never the less to himself.—We come now,

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit was in Christ to be communicated.—We observe,

1. That this is plain from scripture-testimony : Rev. iii. 1. "He hath the seven spirits of God." All the saints have the Spirit of God. He dwells in each of them ; if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. But then this is quite another thing than the simple having of the Spirit. Christ hath the Spirit as he hath the seven stars, that is, at his disposal, to give them or take them from whom he will : Psal. lxi. 18. "Thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Compare Eph. iv. 8. Whence it is plain, that Christ received these gifts, received them to give them to men.—This is plain,

2. For Christ, as Mediator and Surety of the new covenant, is a common person, as Adam was in the first covenant, who received the stock of all mankind in his hand, and lost it. Now, free grace has made up the stock again, and put it in a sure hand, where it never can be lost : Psal. lxxxix. 19. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." He is the second Adam, and therefore

these

the fulness of the Spirit and of his grace is put upon him, to be communicated by him to poor sinners.—Consider farther,

3. That Christ could not have been qualified to execute the office to which the Father had called him, without communicating the Spirit to those with whom he has to deal; therefore says the text, *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath sent me to preach good tidings to the meek.* How shall the poor meek ones, who see nothing in them or about them to recommend them to God, believe the good tidings, without the Spirit of faith? How can the broken hearted have their wounds bound up without the healing Spirit? How can the captives and prisoners be delivered, unless the Spirit break off their fetters.—Consider,

Lastly, That it is from Jesus Christ that all who partake of the Spirit do receive the Spirit; there is no other channel of conveyance: John, i. 16. "Out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John, vi. 63. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life." It is he who sends the Spirit, John, xv. 16. It is true, the Father is said to give the Spirit to them that ask him, Luke, xi. 13.; but it is still in Christ's name, and for his sake, John, xiv. 29. Therefore he is called the Spirit of God's Son, whom he sends forth into the hearts of his people.—We now proceed,

III. To consider the reasonableness and suitability of this glorious device, of the Spirit being put on Christ to be communicated to poor sinners.

I. It is most suitable to the Father's honour, that guilty criminals partake of his Spirit through a Mediator. God looked on all the fallen race of man, and could be pleased with none of them:

Psal.

Pfal. xiv. 3. "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy." But behold his own Son became man! and he is well pleased with him, with his person and mediation, and therefore with sinners in him, Matth. iii. 17. In Christ he meets with the sinner; and his justice being satisfied by him, he may, with safety to his own honour, communicate with the poor creatures, and they receive his Spirit, as members of his own Son, their glorious Head.

2. It is most suitable to the honour of the Son, who is appointed head over all things to the church, which is his body, Eph. i. 23. This is that honour which his Father has put upon him, that he be the great steward of heaven, the trustee for all the elect of God, the great dispenser of the Father's favours, to the objects of everlasting love. And as Pharaoh put an honour upon Joseph, by ordering his petitioners to go to Joseph; so does the Father put honour upon Christ, his own well-beloved Son, by a similar appointment.

3. It is most suitable to the honour of the Holy Spirit; for in this manner the gift of the Spirit appears to be by the infinite value of the blood of the Son of God: Rev. v. 6. "The Lamb slain hath seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." No receiving of this holy fire, but from the altar where a Saviour was slain. No communicating of that Spirit, but through the blood of the Redeemer.

Lastly, It is most suitable to the sinner's case; for Christ is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is our near kinsman, through whom we come to God boldly: Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." We are not able to behold an unveiled

God,

God, his glory would dazzle and confound us; but through the veil of the flesh of Christ, we may behold him, and live.—We now come,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject.
And this,

First, In an use for information.

1. This lets us see the transcendent glory and beauty of Jesus Christ. Pharaoh could say of Joseph to his servants, Gen. xlviii. 38. "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" How does the firmament shine with the stars which sparkle in it! How beautiful is the earth, when decked with the variety of the gifts of nature in the spring! But what are all these to the Mediator's glory and beauty, in whom all the gifts and graces of God's Spirit do center: Psal. xlv. 2. "Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips." There is no man, however well qualified, that excels in all things, there is a want in every individual, but no want in Christ: Song, v. 16. "Yea, he is altogether lovely." (Heb. He is all desires).—We may learn,

2. The absolute fulness and sufficiency of Christ to make the sinner who comes to him perfectly happy; he gives them rest, Matth. xi. 28. There is a fulness of the Spirit in him to answer all their necessities, be what they will. Behold the whole constellation of gifts and graces in our exalted Redeemer. Every good gift, natural, moral, or religious, come from this Spirit. Some have one gift of him, some another; but our Lord Jesus Christ has all, which is more than all the excellencies to be found in angels and men. And what can he want to bestow, who has the Spirit
to

to give to those who come to him?—We may learn,

3. The freedom of grace in Christ. He has all, and he communicates all freely. The spring runs freely without price or hire. It is a pleasure to have a full breast sucked; and it is a pleasure to our blessed Redeemer to do good and to communicate to undeserving sinners.—We may see,

4. The absolute need we have of Christ. Ye are ruined without the Spirit, ye will pine away in your guilt, rust away in your corruptions, and, like dead corpses, be buried out of God's sight, if ye get not the Spirit; and ye cannot have the Spirit but from Christ. This is the only market opened to relieve your necessities.

Lastly, Ye are inexcusable if ye continue without the Spirit, for you may have the Spirit if you come to Christ; but, alas! he may say of us, as John, v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." I would raise your dead souls, I would quicken you, I would make you as a well-watered garden; but alas! ye care not for the Spirit: Prov. i. 25. "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."—We shall improve this subject.

Secondly, In an use of exhortation.

1. I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ, that ye may partake of his Spirit. Christ is saying to you this day, *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*. Come, and I will pour him out upon you. Alas for the want of the Spirit this day! it appears sadly in the whole church, in the congregation, in neighbourhoods, and in families. There is enough of a selfish, devilish, carnal, worldly, profane, and formal spirit, but little of a holy heavenly spirit, to be seen this day. But we may

may get the spirit, if we will by faith come to Christ for it. O that we were all moving to him for this spirit!—To be more particular, we would exhort you,

1. Come to Christ, O thou dead and lifeless sinner, who art lying rotting under the power of thy lusts, who hast a heart within thee which cannot repent and mourn, or let go the dead grip it has taken of the world, and of sinful courses. His Spirit is a spirit of life, which will make the dry bones live, the withered soul flourish as an herb, the heart, which is like a clog now in duties, to be like the chariots of Aminadib: Eph. v. 14. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light."

2. Come, drooping, fainting, dispirited soul, who art harassed with terrors, pierced with fearful apprehensions, whose heart is like a stone, dying within thee. His Spirit is a spirit of light, life, and comfort; he binds up the broken hearted, makes light to arise to those who go mourning without the sun, takes off the sackcloth, and girds with gladness.

3. Come, hard-hearted sinner, whom nothing can move, neither judgements nor mercies, who canst not mourn either for thy own sins, or the sins of the generation. His Spirit can soften the heart. He will take away your stony heart, and give you an heart of flesh. An outpouring of the Spirit, would melt down the heart, and dissolve it in tears of godly sorrow, this would break the bands of iron and bras: Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourn-

eth for his only son ; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

4. Come, tempted sinner, who art harassed with temptations, and art ready to say, One day I shall fall before this great adversary. The Spirit is a spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7. It may be, that temptations come in on thee like a breaking forth of waters, threatening to sweep all before them ; but come to Christ for his Spirit, who is able to stem the tide, to create peace, and to make thee more than a conqueror.

5. Come, unfruitful sinner. The Lord is at much pains with you by ordinances and providences, yet you are barren ! you bring forth no fruit answerable to the pains of the Husbandman. What is the reason the Spirit comes not with the word and providences ? But you may have the Spirit from Christ, and this would make you fruitful : Eph. v. 9. "For the fruit of the Spirit, is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." The blowing of that wind from heaven would make the spices flow out, Cant. iv. 16. and cause you to make progress in your journey to the Zion above.

6. Come, unholy sinner. The Spirit which Christ has to give, is a spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. He works like water in washing the polluted soul, like fire in burning up corruption. He is the great principle of holiness, who works it wherever he comes, and makes of the very worst a vessel fit for the Master's use.

Lastly, Come to Christ for his Spirit, whatever your case be ; you will find a suitable cure from him, by the fulness of the Spirit in him ; he is suited for every case that is put in his hand : Col. ii. 9. 10. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who

who is the head of all principalities and powers." He will be eyes to the blind, light to them that sit in darkness, legs to the lame, meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, cloathing to the naked ; all in all.—To prevail with you in coming to Christ for the Spirit, I would offer you the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is absolutely necessary for you to have, you cannot want him, you must have him. The world may as well want the sun, moon, and stars, as you can want the Spirit ; for without the Spirit ye can do nothing but sin. When the soul is away, the body is dead, and can do nothing but lie and rot in a grave : And when the Spirit of God is not in a man, he is dead in sin, and can do nothing but sin : John, vi. 63. "It is the spirit that quickneth, the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Ye cannot have a good and acceptable thought, nor perform any duty acceptable : John, iv. 24. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." So that all pains are lost upon thee, as on the dead tree, to which summer and winter are alike.—Again, without the Spirit, ye are none of Christ's, Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." All those who are Christ's, they are sealed and marked with the Spirit of Christ : Eph. i. 13. "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Men set their mark on their sheep, and therefore says one, If such a one be one of my sheep, it has such a mark ; so says our Lord, If one of my sheep, he has my Spirit in him ; and so without the Spirit, without Christ, and without the Father, therefore without the Spirit, without God in the world.—Farther,

without the Spirit, ye are undone for ever; for so ye are without God, and therefore without hope, Eph. ii. 12. The dead corpse may be kept a while, but when there is no hope of the return of life, it is buried in a grave; so, without the Spirit, ye may be kept a while through God's patience, but the end will be, to be cast into the pit, and buried out of God's sight in fiery flames.

Mot. 2. You cannot have the Spirit but from Jesus Christ. The blessed Mediator is the bowl from which this holy oil is conveyed to all the lamps which burn with it. The Spirit, says he, is on me: 1 John, ii. 20. "But ye have an unction from the *holy One*, and ye know all things," ver. 27. "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you." The Egyptians must have starved, if they had not been supplied with corn by Joseph, for he had all the corn at his disposal; and we must be for ever without the Spirit, if we receive him not from Christ. The Spirit dwells in none but as members of Christ; and whence shall the members have life but from the Head?

Mot. 3. Ye may have the Spirit, and that freely, from Christ: Prov. i. 23. "Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." And the promise is very bountiful, ye may have all free of cost: Rev. xxii. 17. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Spirit on Christ is that water of life which gives life to the dead, and life more abundantly to the living; and the terms are, Ask of him, and he will give thee living water, John, iv. 10. Not only drops of the spirit, but the spirit poured out, floods of the same: Isa. xlv. 3. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing
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ing upon thine offspring." John, vii. 38. 39. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified)."

Lastly, By way of motive, if ye will not come to Christ for the Spirit, ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, ye are slighers of Christ, and dreadful will your reckoning be: Prov. i. 24.—27. "Because I have called, and ye have refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." It will be more tolerable for those who never heard where they might partake of the Spirit than for you.

In conclusion, I shall only add the following DIRECTIONS.

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit, in the name of Christ; you have a promise of the Spirit; says God by Ezekiel, xxxvii. 27. "And I will put my spirit within you." And said Jesus, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall not your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Take courage then, believe the promise, press it, and depend upon it.

2. Unite with Jesus Christ, accepting him in the gospel-offer, and giving yourselves away freely to him. Bring your dead soul to the Lord of life, and he will breathe in it, and ye shall be like the dead man laid in the sepulchre of Elisha,

who revived, and stood upon his feet, whenever he touched the prophet's bones, 2 Kings, xiii. 21.

Lastly, Wait and look for the Spirit in Christ's ordinances, especially the preaching of the gospel. They who would have the wind to blow on them, go out into the open air; though they may for the present miss it, they wait till it blows; when in like manner exercised, then you shall know that the ministration of the Spirit is glorious, 2 Cor. iii. 8. Amen.

JESUS

JESUS COMPLETELY QUALIFIED
FOR HIS WORK.

S E R M O N XLII.

ISA. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord hath anointed me——.*

UNDER this part of the text, we propose to consider the necessity of the fulness of the Spirit being lodged in Christ. It was necessary, because the Lord had anointed him unto, and sent him forth upon the Mediatorial work. The greatness of that work required it.—Here I observe the following DOCTRINES.

DOCT. I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the Mediatorial work.—Or, in other words,

That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work.

DOCT.

DOCT. II. That the work upon which Jesus the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in him.—We begin with

DOCT. I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the Mediatorial work.—Or, in other words, That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work.—In illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. CONSIDER the anointing here mentioned.

II. Speak of the sending which flowed from and followed upon it.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM to consider the anointing here mentioned. In attending to this, I shall, *first*, shew what is meant by this anointing. *Secondly*, Wherewith Christ was anointed.

First, We are to shew what is meant by this anointing. Under the Old Testament, anointing was a ceremony used for consecrating kings, priests, and prophets: thus David was anointed king, Aaron was anointed priest, Elisha anointed a prophet. This ceremony signified two things:—The designation of the person to the office. It being a sign, by the divine appointment, that this was the person whom God had called to this work; it was also a discovery of the divine purpose, as thereby the person was consecrated to the office; though sometimes it was long after that he got his orders to proceed to the actual exercise of it. Thus Samuel, by the command of the Lord, anointed David king long before he assumed the government, 1 Sam.

xvi. 13. — Again, this ceremony also signified the endowment of the person with abilities and qualifications necessary to fit him for the work. Thus, when Saul was anointed king, God gave him another heart, 1 Sam. x. 13. “And when David was anointed king, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward,” 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Accordingly, Christ’s anointing signifies two things.

1. His designation to the Mediatory office. The Father pitched upon his Son, and set him apart for this grand work, to recover a ruined world. He made choice of him to be the repairer of the great breach, and put the breach under his hand. Hence he is called God’s elect or chosen one : Isa. xlii. 1. “Behold (says God) my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” Christ’s anointing signifies,

2. His being fitted and furnished for that office to which he was designed and set apart : John, iii. 31. “For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” Hence it is said of him, that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” It was an unparalleled work, and so unparalleled qualifications were necessary for it. He was pitched upon to be the Father’s servant in the great work of recovering an elect world. He was infinitely wise who made the choice, and therefore could not but pitch on a suitable person : He was also infinitely powerful, and all sufficient, and therefore could fully qualify him for it. We have both the choice and the furniture together : Isa. xlii. 1. “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring

bring forth judgement to the Gentiles." And this is the import of the anointing.—But let us view it more particularly,

In the designation or choice made by the Father. Infinite wisdom appeared in it most conspicuously, with infinite love to an elect world. When the divine decree and purpose of man's redemption was laid down by the Trinity, the great thing next to be considered was, who should undertake the work, and be the Redeemer. No mere man could be chosen, for none could have a back to bear such a burden. All were guilty, and could not satisfy for their own sin, far less purchase salvation for others. No angel could be chosen, for even they, with their stock, could not have been able to have discharged the debt, in regard it was infinite; wherefore the Father made choice of his own Son, as a person who could undertake it: Psal. lxxxix. 19. 20. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people; I have found David my servant, and with my holy oil have I anointed him." He being the Son of God, it doubtless became the divine perfections to pitch on him, as one who was to purchase for us the adoption of sons, and to bring many children to glory.—Let us view this anointing,

In qualifying him for the work, in which the same love and wisdom appears. Our Mediator had to die, for "without shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin." The divine nature was not capable of dying, therefore he prepared him a body: Heb. x. 5. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me." The same nature which sinned had to suffer; therefore he did not create him a body out of nothing, but prepared
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red him one of the seed of Adam. He was chosen out of the people : Gal. iv. 4. " God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." But farther, our nature was corrupted, and our flesh sinful flesh ; therefore it could not be immediately united to the divine nature ; wherefore he sanctified the substance of which that precious body was formed, and made him a holy human nature : Heb. vii. 26. " For such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, sepearate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." While what the human nature could do or suffer, would not have possessed sufficient virtue, if separated from the divine ; therefore he unites it with it, John, i. 14. " And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And hence the human nature was filled with all gifts and graces necessary to it, for that part which it was to act in the great work. — Let us now,

Secondly, Inquire wherewith Christ was anointed. Not with material oil, but with the Spirit, signified by it ; Psal. xlv. 7. " God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows." And while the designation of the person was from eternity, the Spirit's descending upon him like a dove at his baptism, was the discovery of that eternal choice, and served for the visible designation of him to the world : Matth. iii. 16. 17. " And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straight way out of the water : and, lo ! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him : And, lo ! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And by the same Spirit it was that he was qualified and fitted for the Mediatory work, his holy human nature being with it.—If it be inquired, how his having
been

been anointed can be the reason of the Spirit's being upon him, when the Spirit was that with which he was anointed? I answer, That Christ's having been anointed with the Spirit to qualify him for the Mediatory work, is a very proper reason why the Spirit was lodged and continues to be in Christ, to be communicated from him to the members of his mystical body.

II. We are now shortly to speak of the sending of Christ by the Father. As he anointed, so he sent him. This means the Father's calling him out unto the exercise of his office for which he had been designed, and for which he had been qualified. He was seasonably sent to the work by the Father, and he willingly came and put hand to it, for his Father's glory, and the salvation of poor sinners: Psal. xl. 87. "Then said he, Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within my heart." We may observe three periods of this sending.

The *first* period was at Adam's fall, when all mankind was newly ruined by the first sin; then the Mediator came and looked on the ruins of the world, Gen. iii. 8.; preached deliverance to the captives, ver. 15. telling them that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He healed the broken hearted, by covering Adam and his wife with coats of skin, ver. 21. even the skins of sacrifices, a type of the righteousness of a slain Redeemer. Thus he underpropped the world by his mediation, when all was shaken loose by man's disobedience. He began immediately to repair the breach, and kept the world from absolute and irreparable ruin.

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The *second* period was at his birth, in the fulness of time, when he became man, being born of the virgin: Gal. iv. 4. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The world was then in a deplorable condition; the knowledge of the true God was lost among the Gentiles, religion was corrupted among the Jews, some few were groaning for the consolation of Israel. Then he came in the flesh, being born of a mean woman, and laid in a manger; but at his birth the angels sung, as in Luke, ii. 14. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

The *third* period was when he entered on the public exercise of his ministry at his baptism; then was he, in a special manner, sent out on that work to which he was called: Matth. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matth. iv. 17. "From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Then he went about his work, preaching the gospel, to bring sinners to God; he also became obedient unto the death, according to the everlasting covenant between him and his Father.

III. WE now proceed to make some practical improvement.

1st, In an use of information.

1. This subject informs us, that the salvation of sinners was the concern of a whole Trinity. How great a work must it be, when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each acted their part for bringing it about. The Father sent the Son, the Son submitted to be sent as Mediator, and by the Holy Spirit he was fitted for the work. Never, then, think little of that salvation, which re-

quired such causes and authors to bring it about.
—It informs us,

2. That Jesus Christ is perfectly able to save sinners : Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost." He was the Father's choice to that great work, which may assure us he was an able hand for it. He has all given him to fit him for it, which the fulness of the Godhead affords. The Father had never taken him cautioner, if he had not been perfectly able to pay the debt. He had never laid the sinner's help upon him, if he had not been able to bear the weight of it.

3. See here the manifold wisdom of God, how it is displayed in the contrivance of salvation through Christ. The first creation was a work of wisdom ; but the second was more so ; the confused heap at first was little in comparison of the confusion sin brought into the world, but divine wisdom brought order out of this confusion. Truth meets with mercy, righteousness and peace embrace each other, sin is punished, and the sinner spared. Out of the greatest affront to God, rises the occasion of his greatest glory, his Son's obedience instead of theirs. When at the fall hell rejoiced, angels stood astonished, and men lay groveling in the depth of misery, wisdom found out a way of recovery, to the marring of the devil's joy, the dissipating man's fears, and giving angels a mystery of wisdom to pry into : Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. See here the amazing mercy of God to objects in the deepest misery. To have given rebel sinners some years respite from their due punishment, to

have

have locked them up in hell, to be released after some millions of years, would have glorified mercy; but for an offended God to provide a Mediator himself, proclaims the height and depth of infinite mercy.

5. See here the love of God to poor sinners. The love of the Father is wonderful, in sending his own Son to recover sinners by his obedience and death: John, iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, his only-begotten Son, unto the death, the most bitter death, even the death of the cross."—The love of Christ, which undertook that heavy work for poor sinners. Here is love admirable in all its dimensions: Christ coming in the room of sinners. If ye doubt his love, look into his pierced side, and behold its glowings there.—The love of the Spirit dwelling in Christ, as the Head, to enliven poor sinners as his members, being in him, exciting, moving him forward to the work, and fitting him for it.—I shall only add an use of exhortation.

O! sirs, let Christ be your choice, as he was the Father's. His Father is well pleased with him, be you also well pleased with him. Employ him in your every case, put all your cases in his hand, lay your help where the Father hath laid it. Receive him whom the Father hath sent, receive him for all the ends to which the Father hath anointed and sent him. He is called Messiah, and Christ, to denote his being anointed as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people; he was anointed for all these offices, receive and improve him in them all. He is anointed as the great Prophet, to declare the mind of God to sinners: Isa. lxi. 1. He is to "preach good tidings to the meek." Receive him for your Prophet, and teacher; renouncing your own wisdom, submit yourselves to be taught by his word and Spirit;

and go to him for direction in all cases. He is an anointed Priest: Pſal. cx. 4. "The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." Receive him as your Priest, laying the weight of your ſouls on his ſacrifice and interceſſion; renouncing all confidence in yourſelves. Carry your guilt to him, to be carried off by his atonement, and put all your ſpiritual ſacrifices in his hand, for only out of his hand will they be accepted. He is anointed King: Pſal. ii. 6. "Yet have I ſet my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Submit yourſelves a willing people to the royal Mediator, to receive his commandments, to live according to his laws, to purſue the intereſt of his kingdom in the world, and to fight under his banner againſt the devil, the world, and the fleſh; ſince for theſe ends he is ſent, and has come, it lies on us to receive him as ſuch. And that this may have weight with you, conſider,

(1.) Who ſent him; the Father, the firſt perſon of the glorious Trinity: John; v. 37. "The Father himſelf," ſaid he, "that hath ſent me, hath borne witneſs of me." And will we not welcome him whom the Father hath ſent, and entertain him for the ends for which he is ſent? The Father had a concern for the ſalvation of loſt finners, and hath ſent them a deliverer, a Saviour. How will you answer if you ſlight him?—Conſider,

(2.) Who is ſent. The Father hath put an honour on man, beyond what he hath put on angels, in that he ſent a Saviour for the one, not for the other. Had he ſent a lower perſon, an angel, with what profound reſpect ought we to have received him as the meſſenger of the Lord? how much more when he hath ſent his own Son?—Conſider,

(3.) The errand and deſign on which he was ſent; namely, to recover a loſt world, to make up the
peace

peace between God and sinners: Luke, xix. 10. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." O! may not his errand make him a welcome messenger to the world? If we will not receive him on this errand, we are self-destroyers a second time, who having first given ourselves a dreadful wound, in the next place reject the Saviour, the Physician sent to us.—Consider,

(4.) The work he was sent upon for this end; doing-work, suffering-work. His doing-work we have in our text, it will be pleasing and acceptable to sensible sinners. His suffering-work was hard work, but was a necessary foundation for the other. He preached good tidings, but he brought them from his own death. He bindeth up the broken-hearted, but the healing medicine is his own blood; he proclaims deliverance, but the ransom was his own life.—Consider,

(5.) Whence and whither he was sent; from the Father's bosom to this earth, where he was entertained with all evil treatment, till they nailed him to a cross, and he was buried in a grave, Phil. ii. 6.—8. He was sent from the regions of bliss to this lower world, and refused not the journey; he was sent from the halleluiahs of angels, to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. And when he is come, will we not receive him?

Lastly, Consider the necessity of this mission: Psal. xl. 6. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required; then said I, Lo! I come." The world had universally perished without remedy if he had not come. He bare up the pillars thereof, and warded off the blow of justice, by laying his own neck on the block. And now that he is come, he must be embraced

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(1.) Who sent him; the Father, the first person of the glorious Trinity: John, v. 37. "The Father himself," said he, "that hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." And will we not welcome him whom the Father hath sent, and entertain him for the ends for which he is sent? The Father had a concern for the salvation of lost sinners, and hath sent them a deliverer, a Saviour. How will you answer if you slight him?—Consider,

(2.) Who is sent. The Father hath put an honour on man, beyond what he hath put on angels, in that he sent a Saviour for the one, not for the other. Had he sent a lower person, an angel, with what profound respect ought we to have received him as the messenger of the Lord? how much more when he hath sent his own Son?—Consider,

(3.) The errand and design on which he was sent; namely, to recover a lost world, to make up the
peace

peace between God and sinners: Luke, xix. 10. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." O! may not his errand make him a welcome messenger to the world? If we will not receive him on this errand, we are self-destroyers a second time, who having first given ourselves a dreadful wound, in the next place reject the Saviour, the Physician sent to us.—Consider,

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and improved, else we perish ; for, Acts, iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other salvation to look to: Heb. ii. 3. "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—I shall now go on to illustrate very briefly,

DOCTRINE II. That the work upon which the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in him.

In illustrating this, all that I intend is, To confirm the point briefly, and then conclude with a very short improvement.

To confirm this point, we need do no more but give a short account of Christ's Mediator work.

1. Christ is the Days-man betwixt God and sinners. He was employed to take cognisance of the difference between the two parties, to decide who it was had done the wrong, and on what terms they might be reconciled. Hence we read, John, v. 22. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son." He has framed the covenant of reconciliation, as Mediator between the parties: Song, iii. 9. "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon." In him is found what Job so much desired, Job, ix. 33. "a days-man to lay his hands upon both;" namely, to keep the dissenting parties asunder, lest they should fall foul of one another. This the Mediator had to do; this he did when he timeously stepped in betwixt an offended God and guilty sinners, like the ram caught in the thicket, when Isaac was lying bound on the altar, which stopped the execution, and held the hand of justice, Psal. vi. 7. (quoted above).—He is a days-man, to keep them

them together, lest they should quite seperate, and the reconciliation of the parties blow up. Thus Christ deals with sinners, who otherwise would run away from God, and never come in terms with him. Thus he did with our first parents, whom he brought out of their hiding-place, to set matters on a new footing.

2. He is the Messenger that goes betwixt the parties, intimating the mind of the one to the other, in order to make reconciliation. And in this respect Moses was a typical mediator : Deut. v. 5. "I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." So Christ is called the Messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. He brings the Lord's mind to poor sinners, unfolds the thoughts of love which were from eternity in his breast : John, i. 18. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Thus he brings down the covenant out of the register of heaven, and proclaims it to rebels : And if there be any among them content to come into it, and who accept of it, he reports their acceptance to his Father : John, xvii. 8. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest unto me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me."

3. He is a Surety betwixt the parties, and therefore is called the surety of a better testament, Heb. vii. 22.; engaging and taking burden upon him on their behalf, that so the peace may be firm and lasting.—Christ, the Mediator, is surety for man to God. In the first covenant, man had no surety for himself; and there needed none. He was able to do all that was required of him; for he was in
good

good case, there was no flaw in his estate; but in his fallen state, God would not take his word, nor his most solemn engagement; it behoved him to have a surety to undertake for him, and that both by way of satisfaction and caution. Man was broken, was drowned in debt which he never would be able to pay, and so he needed a surety to make satisfaction, who should be able, and would engage himself to pay the debt: Christ the Mediator then became surety for the broken man, undertook to pay all his debt, gave in his bond for it in the covenant of redemption, which the Father accepted: Psal. lxxxix. 19. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" he engaged body for body, life for life, like Judah for Benjamin, Gen. xliii. 9.; in the fulness of time he paid the debt, and got up the discharge at his own resurrection from the dead. Man was false and fickle, and not to be trusted; so needed a cautioner who would bind for his good behaviour. Christ became cautioner for the poor prodigals, engaging himself that they shall consent to the covenant: John, vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." And that having consented, they shall hold by it, and never fall away totally and finally: John, x. 28. "And I will give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." By his Spirit of faith and holiness, which he puts in them, he accordingly secures them.—He is also surety for God to man. He undertook that God's part of the covenant shall be punctually fulfilled to us: 2 Cor. i. 20. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." It is true, the infinite veracity and power of the principal leaves no need

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of a surety, in respect of himself ; but poor guilty sinners, sensible of their own unworthiness, are timorous, misbelieving, distrustful creatures ; and therefore, that they may be helped to believe, there is a surety of their own nature, even the man Christ Jesus, granted unto them. That all the promises of God in the covenant, shall be fulfilled to those who come into it, he has completely ensured. He has given his cautionary word : John, v. 24. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." He hath given his Spirit as the earnest and seal of the promises, Eph. i. 13. " In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." He has given them the first-fruits of the Spirit in themselves, Rom. viii. 23. He has also given them the Sacrament. He has gone to death with it, saying, " This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," Matth. xxvi. 28.

4. He is an Intercessor betwixt the parties: Isa. liii. 12. " He makes intercession for the transgressors." He, by his interest, manages betwixt the Lord and poor sinners, to set matters right, and keep them so. This is that which relates to the application of his redemption, and puts life in the Mediator's death, that it may be efficacious to his chosen ones. As the High-Priest appeared in the holy of holies, presenting the blood of the sacrifice to the Lord ; so does Christ appear in heaven to intercede for those for whom he has died. And he intercedes,—as a Peace-maker, who actually makes peace betwixt God and every believing sinner: Hence, Heb. xii. 24.
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he is "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;" and his blood is "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." By his means, he who was before an enemy is reconciled to God, brought within the bond of the covenant of peace, and gets a right to all the benefits of it. As by his gracious Spirit he extinguishes the real enmity of the sinner against God, so by his intercession he removes the legal enmity in God against the sinner.—He intercedes as the Secretary, or favourite courtier of heaven, bringing in the sinner into the comfortable gracious presence of God, procuring him access to God, and communion with him in duties: Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." Thus, through the vail of his flesh, the believing sinner draws nigh to God, and God draws nigh to him with his quickening, sanctifying, and comforting influences. The sinner looks on God with the confidence a child does on a father.—He intercedes as a Resident at the court of heaven: Heb. ix. 24. "He is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." And by this means he maintains that peace which he has made betwixt God and believers: Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" He keeps the believer's trade with heaven open and free for them: Rom. v. 2. "By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." He removes any emergent differences, Isa. liii. 12.; and so ensures, by the covenant of peace, that there can never be a total rupture betwixt heaven and them: Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession

for

for them."—He intercedes as an Advocate at the bar of God: 1 John, ii. 1. "If any man sin; we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He pleads their cause before God, upon the ground of his own sufferings, against all their accusers and whatever is charged upon them, so that they are freed from condemnation, their right and title to heaven is still vindicated, notwithstanding their many failures; and wrath can go no farther against them than temporary strokes.—He intercedes as a Solicitor for his people before the Lord. He presents their petitions, and solicits for the granting of them. With much incense he offers the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, Rev. viii. 3. They have many wants, both as to temporal and spiritual things. They must go to God for them, and put up their petitions. But he must present them, else they cannot be heard.

5. He is the Administrator of the covenant, God's deputy-governor, to dispose of the benefits of the covenant, and to manage the whole matter betwixt the Lord and sinners: Matth. xxviii. 18. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." As Joseph was set over the land of Egypt, so he is set over his Father's house, all commerce betwixt the Lord and sinners being through his mediation. As they can offer nothing to God acceptably, but through him; so they can receive no benefit from heaven but through his hand: John, v. 22. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son." He has to bring the elect to consent to the covenant; to rule and govern them in it; to protect, provide, and furnish them with all necessities through the wilderness; and, finally, to give them the crown and kingdom at last; this is the office and work to which Christ was anointed; neither men nor angels

gels could be fit for such a trust. Could any manage it without a fulness of the Spirit lodged in him? therefore, as in John, v. 22. (quoted above), and in ver. 23. "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." All men should honour the Son, for none but one who had the fulness of the divine perfections could be capable of such a trust. Who else was fit to be days-man between God and sinners? Who else could be the messenger of the covenant, for who hath known the mind of the Lord, but his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who from eternity lay in his bosom?

I conclude with a very short improvement.

1. Learn hence, that the work of the salvation of sinners, restoring them to the favour of God, and to make them happy, is a great work, and a work which was not easily accomplished. It was a work above the power of men or angels, a work not to be performed but by him who has all power in heaven and earth. Think on this, ye that judge it such an easy thing to obtain mercy; and assure thyself it is a work which can never be done but by Christ's own hand.

2. Highly esteem and honour Christ, particularly by believing in him, who is thus qualified for this great work. O what need of the fulness of the Spirit in him to support him under the load of the elect's debt,—in order to the discharging it,—and to touch and turn the hearts of sinners unto God!

Lastly, See your absolute need of Christ. You must have an interest in him, else you cannot be saved. His mediation only can save you from the wrath of God, and from the lowest hell. Amen.

JESUS

JESUS A PREACHER OF GOOD TIDINGS TO
THE MEEK.

SERMON XLVIII.

ISA. lxi. 1. *The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.*

IN these and the following words, we have represented the great, the important work for which Jesus was appointed, and to which he was specially called by his heavenly Father,—work for which he was completely qualified, by the Spirit of the Lord God being upon him. We propose to consider the several parts of this work, in that order in which they are set before us; and accordingly begin with that part, his having “to preach good tidings to the meek.”—In which words we have,

1. The work itself in which the Son of God was employed, and to which he was called: *To preach good tidings.* He was a minister by office: Rom. xv. 8. “Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God made to the fathers;” the great minister of the gospel. He

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was the best among men ; he brought good tidings, the best of tidings ; by these tidings is meant the gospel, Luke, iv. 18. This is the good news, the tidings of peace and salvation, which Jesus brought from heaven to earth.—We have,

2. The special object of this part of the work, *the meek*. The word signifies, such as are meek, humble, and submissive, being made so by poverty and affliction. In the parallel place, it reads poor, and the one explains the other. If it is inquired, what poor ones are meant ? I think it is plain, it is not those who are mean in the world, but the poor in spirit, for these poor ones are meek. These meek poor ones are classed with the broken-hearted, and both distinguished from the captives and prisoners, by the original accentuation. So that by the meek here is meant, the poor in spirit, those who, as being convinced by the law, have seen themselves to be poor, that they have nothing in which they could stand before God as righteous, but look on themselves as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. And it is remarkable, that our Saviour's sermon on the mount begins with good tidings to such persons : Matth. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But here there occurs a question :—Was Christ to preach the good tidings of the gospel to none but these ? To this I answer, The gospel was in itself good tidings unto all : Luke, ii. 10. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Our Lord preached to all who heard him promiscuously these good tidings, but in effect they were not good to any but to the poor in spirit among them. None but these could relish the goodness of them ; to others they were tasteless, but

but to the poor in spirit, they sunk like a refreshing oil into their bones.—From these words I take the following

DOCTRINE, That as the tidings of the gospel will indeed be good and welcome tidings to those who are meek, and poor in spirit, so Jesus is, by his heavenly Father, employed on the great work of preaching the good tidings of the gospel to sinners, especially to such who are meek, and spiritually poor in their own eyes.—In handling this doctrine we propose,

I. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

III. Shew how this great work of preaching is, and hath been performed by Christ.

IV. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

V. Make some practical improvement of the whole.—We are then,

I. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.—As to this, we observe, that this meekness comprehends in it,

1. A pressing scene of utter emptiness in one's self: Rom. viii. 18. "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." A poor man going abroad, sees this and the other thing, in the houses of the rich; but when he comes home, he sees none of them there. Thus, the meek poor soul looks through himself, and there, as in himself, he sees nothing but emptiness of all goodness, no holiness, wisdom, nor strength. The heart, which should be the garden of the Lord,

appears as a bare muir, a wild, a waste. He is ready to cry out, O barren, dry, sapless heart and nature of mine ! Agur looks for knowledge, and he says, Prov. xxx. 2. 3. " Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." The prodigal looks to his provisions, and says, " How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger ?" Paul reckons up his whole self, and the sum total is nought : 2 Cor. xii. 11. " For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."—This meekness comprehends,

2. A pressing sense of sinfulness : Rom. vii. 14. " We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." He looks to the whole of himself, and he sees nothing on him but rags ; a sinful nature, a corrupt heart, unclean lusts, and an unholy life. He must rank his righteousness with his unrighteousness, his duties with his sins, for he is defiled with them all : Isa. lxiv. 6. " But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." These meek poor ones see themselves the very picture of rank poverty, having only filthy rags, death painted on their face by want, and overgrown with the vermin of filthy lusts. They see themselves not only nothing, but worse than nothing, while they look over these frightful accounts of the debt of sin, which stand against them, and for which they have nothing to pay.—This meekness comprehends,

3. A pressing sense of misery by sin. Like the prodigal, they see themselves ready to perish with hunger. Debt is a heavy burden to an honest heart,

heart, and filthiness to one that desires to be clean : Rom. vii. 24. " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" They look about them, and see themselves in a cloud of miseries, arising from their sins. Their poverty presseth them down. They are obliged to do many things which otherwise they would not, and cannot attain to other things which they desire to arrive at : Rom. vii. 19. " For the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do." It separates them from that communion with God which they would otherwise enjoy, makes them sit within, mourning without the sun, when otherwise they might walk abroad in the light of the Lord's countenance. This presseth their souls to the dust.—It comprehends,

4 A sense of utter inability to help one's self : 2 Cor. iii. 5. " Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." They see themselves in the mire, but unable to help themselves out ; therefore these poor men cry unto the Lord, Psal. xxxiv. 6. They see an emptiness and weakness in all their external privileges, their gifts, duties, yea, their graces, to save and help them. They count all things but loss for Christ, and wish to be found in Christ, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law. They find the sting in their conscience, but cannot draw it out ; guilt is a burden, but they cannot throw it off ; lusts are strong and uneasy, but they are not able to master them ; and this presses them sore.—This meekness comprehends,

5. A sense of the absolute need of a Saviour, and of help from heaven : 2 Cor. iii. 5. " But our sufficiency is of God." The pride of the spirit is beat down, they lie down at the Lord's feet, saying, Jer. xxxi. 18. " Thou hast chastised me, and I was

chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." They see they will be ruined if their help come not from above. Their case appears desperate to all remedies, but those which are under the management of an eternal omnipotent hand. They say to their souls, as the king of Israel said to the woman in the time of famine, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?" —It comprehends,

6. A sense as to utter unworthiness of the Lord's help ; they see nothing which they have to recommend them to the Lord's help. They dare not stand upon worth, like those proud beggars, who would have others to value them, and who value themselves, on what they have been or done. Like the centurion, they say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Hence there is a word put in for them, Isa. lv. 1. "Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." They own the Lord would be just, if he should never vouchsafe his mercy and grace to them, but exclude them for ever from his presence : Jer. iii. 22. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." They see a loathsomeness in the best things about them, in their reformation, mourning, their desires of Christ, wrestling, and prayers for mercy ; so that they conclude, if ever he notice them, it must be altogether for his own name's sake.—This meekness comprehends,

7. An earnest desire as to the supply of soul-wants : Mat. v. 6. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst

thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." A greedy man, we say, is always poor, because natural poverty consists rather in the desire of what we want, than in the want itself. There are many who want spiritual good things, yet are not poor in spirit, because they are not pained with the want of them. But the poor in spirit are pained with the want of spiritual good things. They pant for them, Psal. xlii. 1.; long for them, thirst for them, Psal. lxxiii. 1. Hence we read of the expectation of the poor, which shall not perish for ever, Psal. ix. 18.—It comprehends,

Lastly, A hearty contentment in submitting to any method of help which the Lord will prescribe: Acts, ix. 7. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Beggars must not be chusers; these meek poor ones are content with Christ on any terms, while others stand contending about them. Necessity has no law, and hunger will break through stone-walls. Who so are thus situated, will be for a Saviour, a righteousness, and holiness, at any rate. They are content to be taught, content to be managed: Psal. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." They are content to part with all, for the enriching pearl of great price.—We are now,

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

The poor in spirit are wounded by the law; the gospel brings a healing medicine to these wounds. It suits their case fully, and declares to them the good news of a salve for all their sores. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxv. 25. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Appli-
cable

cable this to nothing so much as the good tidings brought us from heaven in the gospel. I cannot enumerate all the articles of these good tidings, but shall take notice of the following.

1. The gospel-tidings are tidings of a complete salvation. And are not these good tidings? Luke, ii. 11. "For unto us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." O! lost sinners, there is a salvation purchased for you, a great, a complete salvation, a salvation from sin, Matth. i. 21. and from the wrath of God, John, iii. 16. It is offered to you, and offered freely, though it was dear bought; it is offered without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. If ye ask what ye shall do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. Though you are lost, though you have destroyed yourselves, yet here is help for you. Though ye are insensible sinners, the tidings are to you; it will in particular be good and welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, who see their lost and undone condition. A Saviour will be as welcome a sight to them, as a rope cast out from the shore will be to a drowning man. They will eagerly embrace the Saviour and his salvation: Song, i. 3. "Because of the favour of of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." —These tidings relate,

2. To a redemption, to a ransom paid: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Sin and Satan made war upon the world, and overcame them all in Adam; so that by nature we are captives and slaves. No more God's free men, nor our own men, but slaves; and the rattling of the chains of divers lusts upon us are evidences of it. But good tidings, O captives! the King's Son, out of
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of his princely bounty, has purchased for you redemption, he has paid a complete ransom, even his own blood; and whosoever will, may come to him. Your freedom is bought; come, take the benefit of it, by following him out of the land of your captivity: Zech. ix. 11. 12. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water; turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." But what avails this to those who account it a kind captivity, who love their master, and his drudgery work? they will not come to Jesus. But never were the tidings of a ransom so welcome to a slave in Turkey, as these are to meek poor ones, who are groaning under their bondage, and breathing for the liberty of the sons of God.—These tidings relate,

3. To an indemnity, a pardon to criminals who will come to Jesus: Acts, xiii. 38. 39. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The world of mankind, God's natural subjects, have joined his grand enemy, and risen up in rebellion against their sovereign Lord. The law has proclaimed us all traitors, justice demands vengeance on the criminals, and we cannot escape by flight or by might. But good tidings, O criminals! The glorious Mediator has got an act of grace, of indemnity and pardon, passed in the court of heaven, in favour of a ruined world, bearing, that whosoever will come in, and lay down their arms, shall have a full and free pardon, written, for the better security, in the blood of the Mediator. It is proclaimed to you, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake

forfake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." In this indemnity, there are no exceptions: Isa. i. 18. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: Tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Now, whatever this be to others, it will be welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, whose consciences are galled with the sting of sin, bowing down under a sense of guilt. Never was a pardon more welcome to a malefactor on the scaffold, than this will be to them: Isa. xxxiii. 24. "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities."—These tidings relate,

4. To a glorious physician of souls, who never misses to cure his patients: Matth. ix. 12. 13. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." That forbidden fruit which was eaten by our first parents, has entailed dreadful diseases on all their posterity; so that this world is no better than an hospital, where there is not one sound person; and the sickness is unto death. But good tidings, O sin-sick soul! There is a glorious Physician come from heaven, who will cure all who will come to be cured by him. He cures infallibly; his blood cleanseth from all sin. He cures freely: Hos. xiv. 4. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." He rejects no patients: John, vi. 37. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The medicine of his blood and Spirit removes all diseases. What is thy disease? Is it a stony heart? He takes it away, and gives an
heart

heart of flesh. Is it blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness? He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. Is it the falling evil of backsliding? the consumption or decay of grace? the running issue of predominant lusts? the fever of raging lusts? the universal leprosy of the corruption of nature? All these he can cure, for he healeth all manner of diseases. They who see not their diseases, will indeed slight him; but it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are groaning under these diseases. O! then, will such an one say, I will take my stony heart to him, my blindness to him, &c.—These tidings are the tidings,

5. Of a feast: Isa. xxv. 6. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Since man has left God, he has had nothing to feed upon, but the dust with the serpent, or the husks of created things with the swine. He has never been satisfied, he never could get enough; still red hunger has been upon him, like those who eat but are not satisfied. But good tidings, O famished sinners! our Lord Jesus Christ has made a feast for hunger-bitten sinners, and they are all invited to it: Isa. lv. 2. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the best of feasts, where the soul may feed to the full. Jesus himself is the maker, and also the matter of it; all the benefits of the covenant are the provision which are served up at this feast; he who eats thereof shall never die. It is true, that most men put no value upon it: Prov. xxvii. 7. "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." But, Psal. xxii. 26. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied."

satisfied." It will be good tidings to hungry souls, who are sick of the dust and of husks, and are longing to eat bread in their Father's house, where there is plenty and to spare.—These tidings relate,

6. To a treasure : 2 Cor. iv. 7. " But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Man was broken by his fall ; he lost all his goods, and all his credit in heaven ; so that absolute poverty reigns among Adam's sons, who have neither in them nor on them for the present necessity, and besides are drowned in debt to the justice of God. But good tidings, poor sinners ! There is a treasure hid in the field of the gospel, which will enrich you ; and by the gospel you are pointed to it. O buy the field ! Matth. xiii. 44. In this field are the most precious things, precious promises, and within them precious Christ, with all his merits ; gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18. Here is variety of all good things, and abundance. They who are rich in their own eyes will not value this treasure ; but to the meek poor ones, it will be glad tidings. They will readily do as the man, Matth. xiii. 14. who sold all that he had, and bought the field in which the great treasure was hid.—These tidings relate,

7. To a marriage, a most happy match for poor sinners : Hof. ii. 19. 20. " And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving kindness, and in mercies ; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Bridegroom is the royal Mediator, who is content to match with poor captive souls. We are naturally of the house of hell : John, viii. 44. " Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This being

ing our case, we could have no hopes of being comfortably disposed of. But good tidings, O children of the devil's family ! You may be married to the Son of God, who for that end has taken on our nature ; he says, Matth. xxii. 4. " All things are ready : come unto the marriage." This match is the most honourable, the richest, the happiest, of which we are capable. There is nothing to hinder the match, he will make you lovely ; and, what is more, he will make you willing. Most men despise this marriage, they prefer their farms and merchandise to it. But the poor meek ones will as gladly embrace it, as ever a captive woman, to save her life, would match with the most desirable conqueror.—These tidings relate,

8. To a victory, a glorious victory : Isa. xxv. 8. " He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all eyes." There is no getting to the heavenly Canaan, without fighting our enemies ; which would, if possible, keep us out there. We are not able for them ; sin, Satan, and death, are too strong for us. But good tidings ! Christ has fought that battle, and obtained a glorious victory ; he offers you a share of the victory and spoils : Rev. iii. 21. " To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Join the conqueror, come up at his back against your spiritual enemies, and ye shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us, Rom. viii. 37. They who have not yet broke their covenant with death, and agreement with hell, will slight this victory. But it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who would fain break through the host of their spiritual enemies, but know not how to make it out.—These tidings relate,

Lastly, To a peace, a most desirable peace : Eph. ii. 14. " For he (Christ Jesus) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Sin made discord, and broke the peace between heaven and earth ; so that God and the sinner became enemies. All access to God, all communication betwixt heaven and earth, was blocked up. But good tidings ! Christ has made peace by his own blood. It is offered to you, Isa. xxvii. 4. 5. " Fury is not in me : Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." It is a firm peace, on the most solid foundation, a lasting peace which will never terminate, a peace which will ere long be complete in all its parts ; peace external, internal, eternal.—This will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are wounded with the apprehensions of God's anger, and affrighted with the thoughts of his wrath.—We are, then,

III. To shew how this work of preaching is and hath been performed by Jesus Christ.—As to this, we observe, That he performed it under the Old Testament, and under the New Testament dispensation.

First, He performed this work under the Old-Testament dispensation.—Under this dispensation,

1. The first proclamation of these tidings was done personally by himself in paradise, to the compendized world, our first parents : Gen. iii. 15. " And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Son of God appearing in human shape, as a prelude of his incarnation, sat as their

their Judge, and, as the Interpreter of his Father's mind, preached the first gospel to them in that promise, which contains the substance and abridgement of the whole gospel. He was absolutely the first, in all respects, who preached the good tidings of the gospel.

2. The second proclamation was, by his ambassadors in his name, who were of two sorts:—Extraordinary, namely, the prophets whom he inspired infallibly to teach the people: 2 Pet. i. 21. “For the prophesy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”—And ordinary teachers, such as priests and Levites under the law, priests and others before the law. And in respect of this preaching by men in his name, he is said to have preached to those who lived before the flood: 1 Peter, iii. 19. “By which also he went, and preached unto the spirits in prison.”—There was also a proclamation,

3. By his written word, Deut. xxx. 11.—14. This is his own word, where the meek poor ones may always find the glad tidings of salvation. Before it was written, they never wanted inspired men, and when it was written, though for a time, they might want prophets, yet this they had always from him as an infallible rule.

2dly, He preached and preaches under the New-Testament dispensation.—This he did,

1. By his own personal preaching in the days of his flesh, when he went about among the Jews, preaching to them as the Minister of the circumcision: Rom. xv. 8. “Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” So that he himself, by himself, did begin this dispensation. The gospel at

the first began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. "He spake as never man spake, and taught as one having authority."—He did it,

2. By inspiring his apostles to preach and write the doctrines of salvation, contained in the New Testament, on whom he poured out his Spirit, and by their writings, they being dead,—yet speak to us from him and by him.—He does it,

3. By raising up and continuing always a gospel-ministry in the church: Eph. iv. 11.—13. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And with them he has promised to be present always, even unto the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 20. These preach in his name, as deputed by him to declare these good tidings.

Thus you see this work is performed by the Son of God, not only by himself, but by his servants in his name. And though the mistakes, errors, and unfaithfulness of ordinary ministers, both under the Old and New Testament, are solely their own, their preaching of the true doctrine of the gospel is indeed his; they are but as it were the voice, he is the speaker. For—He gave and gives the gifts whereby they are fitted to preach the gospel. All their tapers are lighted at his shining lamp: John, i. 9. "That was the true light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the world." Their wisdom and knowledge in divine mysteries is given them by him, for the good of his church, Eph. iv. 8. Their
commission

commission is from him, and from him they derive their power and authority, Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. They are his ministers and servants sent out upon his work, and to him they must give an account: *Lastly*, The efficacy of their ministry is solely owing to him and his Spirit, 1 Cor. iii. 7. "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He makes it effectual to his elect ones. —We are,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, That none but he was fit to be employed in this work.—This will appear if we consider,

1. That none but he could reveal the secrets of love, which were hid from eternity in the breast of God: John, i. 18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Neither man nor angel could open up these. But he was privy to his Father's counsels, as being in the bosom of his Father from all eternity.

2. None but he was fit to be an universal preacher to all persons for whom these tidings were designed, and to whom they were to be carried, and this in all ages. Who else could have the great charge of this weighty business? This required one of infinite wisdom, and one every where present.

Lastly, Whose testimony but his could be a sufficient ground of faith in this, of all matters the most important? Here lies the weight of God's honour, and the salvation of an elect world; and this required no less solid a bottom, than the testimony of Truth itself.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLIX.

ISA. lxi. 1. *The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.—*

HAVING gone through the doctrinal part of this subject, by offering what was intended on the several heads of method which we laid down, we shall now, as was proposed,

IV. MAKE some practical improvement; and this in uses of information,—trial,—and exhortation.

We are, in the *first* place, to improve this subject in an use of information.

1. Hence you may learn what is the great cause of slighting the gospel, of that coldrife entertainment which it gets amongst most of its hearers, that little relish which there is for the great truths of the gospel; why so few do comply with the gracious calls which it affords. People may at-
tribute

tribute this to what causes they will, but the true cause is the want of this meekness and poverty of spirit. Instead of this, there are pride and self-conceit, unsubdued and unmortified. I may branch these out into several particulars, as opposed to this meekness. There is,

(1.) No due sense of spiritual wants: Prov. xxvii. 7. "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Most men are sick of a Laodicean disease, saying in their practice as they said in their hearts, that "they are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. They are not mourning under their want of light, of life, and of holiness. They reign as kings with what they have, though, as with King Saul, God is departed from them. Hence they do not value that treasure which is hid in the field of the gospel.

(2.) Men have no true sight and sense of their own sinfulness. They see not the sinfulness of their nature, of their hearts, lips, and lives, but are like Sampson, without his two eyes: Matth. ix. 12. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They are pining away in their sins; their sickness has not yet taken them by the heart; their wounds are not lanced; the law has not had its effect upon them, and therefore the gospel is not relished.

(3.) Their eyes are veiled, so that they see not their misery by sin, and as being without Christ: Hof. vii. 9. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not;—and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Did they see the clouds of wrath which are hanging above their heads, the quick approaches which death with its sting is making towards them, their separation from God, and from
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all the privileges of the covenant, they could not be at ease. The gospel-tidings would be to them as life from the dead.

(4.) They are strangers to their utter inability to help themselves. They are like Sampson, in another case, who knew not that his strength was departed from him. We may see how corrupt nature changes itself into various shapes on this point. If you urge men to ply the work of their salvation, Alas! say they, we can do nothing; they thus make it a covert for their sloth. Urge them with the necessity of reformation and repentance, they say, It is time enough, they will attend to this afterwards; as if it were in the power of their hand to do this business at any time: they thus make it a covert for their delays, and still have no relish for the gospel.

(5.) They do not feel their need of Christ: Rev. iii. 17. "They need his blood and Spirit, but they are not duly sensible of their need." Their own works are big in their own eyes, and appear to them sufficient in order to obtain God's favour. Their natural and acquired abilities are also with them sufficient in order to their sanctification; they are by no means shaken out of themselves; therefore the offer of the gospel is but an offer of food to the full soul, and so is loathed.

(6.) They see not their own unworthiness of a Saviour's help; they come to the market of grace with their money in their hand. They look on themselves as worthy of what Christ should do for them, Luke, vii. 4. Though they be perhaps so far humbled as to see they must have mercy and help from the Lord, yet they look on their reformation and duties as what cannot but recommend them to Christ beyond many others.

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They cannot see how the Lord can reject those who come so far a length as they do. Hence the doctrine of free grace is but tasteless to them.

(7.) They have no anxiety for the supply of their soul-wants. They want grace and holiness, but they can be easy without them. Like foolish virgins, they sleep on at ease, while they have no oil for their lamps: Prov. vi. 10. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Their desires are keen after the world, but weak, faint, and languishing after spiritual good things. They have no hunger and thirst after them. Hence they value not the gospel, nor the fountain of living waters.

(8.) They are not content with Christ but on terms of their own making. They are like those who seek to buy a commodity which yet they can be without. If they can get it at their own price, they will take it; if not, they can want it. There are right-eye sins, yet they will by no means part with them. They are not pleased with the covenant, some things are in it which they must have out; there are some things out which they must have in, else they will not come into it. Hence they care not for the gospel, or that covenant which it reveals.

2. Hence learn, that slight the gospel-call who will, the meek, the poor in spirit will gladly receive it. They who are shaken out of themselves by the law, will be glad to creep under that shelter which is held forth in the gospel. These souls will feast sweetly on what is tasteless to others, what others tread under feet and despise. The hungry are glad of that for which the full soul has no appetite; and just so it is in this case.—This subject informs us,

3. Of the dignity and honour of the work of
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the ministry. With Paul, we would not be ashamed to magnify that office which is conversant about those things which are most necessary for the world, which bring the highest honour to God, and the greatest good to mankind. It is true, it is often a despised office in the world; but wisdom is justified of her children. God had but one Son, and he made him a minister, a preacher of the gospel. He is the chief shepherd and bishop of souls, and therefore the office of the ministry will be esteemed by all those who have a true esteem for Christ.—It informs us,

4. Of that good-will which the Father and the Son jointly bear to sinners; since the Father put his own Son into this work, and the Son readily engaged in it. Do they not by this say, "Why will ye die?" It was good-will to men in its utmost height, that ever such tidings were to be carried, and that ever such a messenger was employed.—It informs us,

5. How acceptable meekness and poverty of spirit are unto the Lord, who has put a peculiar article in Christ's commission for such. As to others, he is to humble and bring them down; as to these, he is to refresh and revive them with good news.—It informs us,

6. As to the goodness and weight of the good tidings of the gospel, which are brought to us by such a hand. Surely the weight of the matter must be great, when such a messenger was sent to publish it.—We are informed,

7. As to the danger of slighting these tidings, though men be employed in carrying them; for they speak in the name of the great Messenger, preach in the name, and by the authority of, the great Preacher. So he that "despise them, despise him that sent them:" Heb. ii. 3. "How shall

shall they escape, if they neglect so great a salvation?"

This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby we may try whether we be meek and poor or not. What relish have we for gospel-truths? The meek, the poor in spirit, (and such all must be who are true Christians), have a singular relish for the word of the gospel. It tastes to them very differently from what it does to any in the world besides. Job says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," chap. xxiii. 12. David says, "They are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb," Psal. xix. 10.—For,

1. They are admitted to partake of the kernel of the word, while others break their teeth on the shell. It comes to them as it did to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 5. "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It has not been a dry channel to them, or a dead letter, but the ministrations of the Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, 1 Pet. ii. 2. 3. "As new-born babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." And this first taste of it leaves a relish behind it; the drawing by of the vail has discovered the treasure in the earthen vessels.

2. It is their food, food proper and suitable to their new nature: Deut. xxxii. 47. "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." All living creatures have their proper food; thus one relishes and delights in that which another does not desire. The new creature is nourished by the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. This is natural

natural to them, for the saints have had their life by it, they are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. Thus the saints have a peculiar relish for the word of God, while others do not regard it; more than the dog does the hay, which, though the ox feeds sweetly on it, yet it is not agreeable to the dog.

Lastly, All their hopes are in it; it is all their salvation, and all their desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.; take this from them, and what have they more? Hence they are content to part with all to buy this field, Matth. xiii. 44. and to part with life itself rather than the gospel, Mark, viii. 35.—What wonder is it that a landed man should have a delight in reading his charter, the pardoned criminal in reading the king's pardon, which another has not? As natural is it that the Christian should have a delight peculiar to himself in reading and hearing the gospel.—Here occurs a

Question, Since hypocrites may have a relish of the good tidings of the gospel, how shall I distinguish between their relish and the relish of a sincere Christian, who is meek and poor in spirit?—To this I

Answer, Hypocrites may have some desires, and wait upon public ordinances, Isa. lviii. 2. Like the stony-ground hearers, they may receive the word joyfully, Matth. xiii. 20.; but yet there are great differences betwixt their desires and those of a sincere Christian.—Such as,

1. The sincere Christian relishes the good tidings of the gospel as good, yea, as the best for him, so as that he can lay the weight of his salvation, for time and eternity, upon this word, and chuse it for his portion, Psal. cxix. 111.; whereas the hypocrite may relish them as good, but not as the best for him: So that, for all the relish he has of the word, he has another thing which he looks

looks on as still better for him. He has something else on which he is disposed to lay at least part of his weight before the Lord; for he is never poor in spirit, nor shaken out of his own righteousness. But the Christian has no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3.

2. The Christian gets his relish for the gospel, by feeling the extreme bitterness of sin: Acts, ii. 37. "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But the hypocrite comes easier by his: "When he hears the word, he anon with joy receives it," Matth. xiii. 20. No man can relish health at the rate one does who is brought back from the gates of death. Many relish the sweetness of the word to whom sin was never made bitter; or if it was, it was never the bitterest of all things. Hence the relish for such is very superficial. But God puts in more and more bitterness in sin to his own people, till it becomes of all bitters the bitterest; and then they truly relish the good tidings of the gospel.

3. The Christian's relish for the gospel is the most powerful and overcoming relish which he has. The hypocrite's is not so: Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So says the Christian, but of the hypocrite it is said, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." The sincere Christian chuses Christ

peremptorily, if they should beg with him. They see such a suitableness in him to their case, that they must have him on any terms; whereas the hypocrite gets only half a look of Christ in the gospel. Hence he has only half affection for him, a kind of hankering after him. Christ is sweet to them, but still some one lust is sweeter; so that, like Orpah, they leave him, but not without some affection for him. But the Christian-like Ruth cleaves unto him, and thereby is brought to honour.

Lastly, The Christian relishes all the tidings of the gospel in every particular of them, whereas the hypocrite has always something in them which he does not approve of. The Christian without shame has respect to all God's commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. He relishes the goodness of the promises, and also the holiness of the commandments. "He esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right," ver. 128. Herod heard John gladly till his beloved lust was touched. And so do many, they love the word, with the exception of that which strikes against their beloved lusts.

This subject may be improved,

Thirdly, In an use of exhortation.

As ever you would relish the good tidings of the gospel, labour to be meek and poor in spirit. Would you have your souls refreshed at ordinances? Would you partake of the goodness of our Lord's house, and find that in ordinances, which is the hidden manna, which the carnal world knows not of? Well, take this course; it is the way to prepare yourselves for it.

1. Keep up always a deep sense of your own sinfulness, wretchedness, and absolute need of Christ. Our Lord was called the friend of publicans,

blicans and sinners, because they who saw the least good in themselves got most of his converse : 1 Pet. v. 5. " God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The low valleys have the waters running in them, when they run off the high hills as fast as they come on : Isa. xl. 4. " Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." The man who feels his disease prizes the remedy, while he who is raving and insensible disregards it.

2. Be of a teachable disposition ; this is true meekness : Psal. xxv. 9. " The meek will he teach his way." They who sit down to judge the word, rather than to be judged by it, may meet with what may disgust or please their fancy, but are out of the way of the true spiritual relish for the word : James, i. 21. " Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." How many a weak Christian's soul is refreshed with that word, in which men who have knowledge, but not grace, find nothing. They will be sure to profit who lie down at the Lord's feet, to learn and receive the word as the word of God.

3. Be much in reviewing and mourning over your spiritual wants. Look not so much to what you have attained, as to what you are yet short of. Imitate Paul, in " forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before," Phil. iii. 13. Mourn over your darkness, deadness, and unholiness. Let these be your continual burden, and you shall not want a word in season, Isa. l. 4. Jesus hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. This would make you lie at the catch for a word from the Lord, like Benhadad's

servants in another case, and receive the Lord's message greedily, as what in one way or another will profit you.

4. Cry much to God for communion with him in gospel-ordinances. Come to ordinances in a believing expectation of enjoying it. Set yourselves to receive the gospel as the Lord's word to you, which worketh effectually in you that believe. The Lord appoints sinners to meet with him there, saying, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," *Exod. xx. 24.* Propose a meeting with him there also, and you may be sure it will hold. Like Jacob, you will prevail with God to bless you, *Hos. xii. 4.* compare *Gen. xxxv. 1.* Christ had promised the Spirit, and commanded the disciples to wait for him, *Acts, i. 4.* They continued in prayer, *ver. 14.* See the fruit of it, *chap. ii.*

Lastly, Be thankful for the least of God's mercies, and be submissive to the Lord under every trying dispensation, as sensible of your utter unworthiness. When was it that Jacob got the blessing? Was it not when in this frame, "I am not worthy," said he, "of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." A sense of unworthiness as to the least mercies, cannot miss to produce in you a relish for the great mercies of the gospel.

There are many complaints as to the want of God's presence in ordinances. There is not that found in them which was in former times.—Many lay the blame of this on ministers; and I dare say, there is not either a godly minister in Scotland, or a godly Christian, acting as such,
who

who dare refuse that he has a real share in it.—The *clean*, to cast stones at the *guilty*, must come out from among those ministers and people who are strangers to their own hearts, and see better into others than they do into themselves. But however it be, I dare promise, in the name of the Lord, that the hungry shall not be sent empty away. The meek poor ones shall be feasted in ordinances; and their hungry souls shall be refreshed with the gospel, fare with others as it will: Psal. xxii. 24. "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied." Matth. v. 6. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."—O! but the spiritual relish for the word is well worth all the trouble which is necessary for having it. For,

1. This is the hidden manna peculiar to God's hidden ones on earth: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," Rev. ii.

17. We read, Exod. xvi. 13. 14. of a dew under which the manna lay. The ordinances are that dew; communion with Christ in ordinances, by relishing his word, is the manna under it. The ordinances are the cabinet; this is the opening of the cabinet, and the finding of the jewel, the drawing by the vail, and beholding the glory; the digging up the field, and falling on the treasure; the breaking the shell, and getting out the pearl.

2. This would make the Sabbath the most pleasant day in all the week, the hours of worship the most pleasant hours, which now to most are a weariness. See how the gospel, felt in its power, doth affect: Isa. ix. 3. "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Compare ver. 2. If you had ever any experience of this relish, dare you say but that these were your golden days, even

the best time ever you had in your life, and that all the world could never make up your loss since you wanted them? You who never tasted of it, believe others, since you are not capable of judging in the matter: Psal. lxxxiv. 10. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Believe those who have got that at ordinances, which has made them joyfully embrace persecution, banishment, a scaffold, and a fire.

3. This would readily hang about you all the week, in a holy, savoury, tender disposition, and make you rejoice at the return of the Sabbath: Psal. cxxii. 1. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is good being in Christ's company in his sanctuary; wherever they go afterwards, they smell of his good ointments; knowledge is taken of them that they have been with Jesus, Acts, iv. 13. Remember what is said of the gospel, 2 Cor. ii. 16. "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Alas! how rank and unfavoury are the conversations of most, because they never get a relish for the word.

4. This would make you useful Christians. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she relished the gospel, she got another spirit. As she had been formerly a prop of the devil's kingdom, and an agent for him in the place where she lived; she now, when converted by grace, turns useful for others. This would make you naturally commend the way of God to others, would make you useful in your families, in the congregation, and in the country-side.

Lastly, This would be a heaven on earth. What is the happiness of the saints in glory? They enjoy

joy God, and this in the utmost perfection. You should relish that enjoyment of him, which in your measure you have for the present, as a prelude, an earnest of what shall be your privilege hereafter.

I SHALL have done with a word to all in general, and in particular to meek poor ones.—To all in general, I would say, Entertain the good tidings of the gospel, slight them not, give them a suitable entertainment. Believe them as undoubted truths. When God speaks, it is reasonable we believe; for he is Truth, he is the faithful and true Witness, Rev. iii. 14. The carnal mind is apt to fall into unbelief of the gospel, which reflects great dishonour upon God: 1 John, v. 10. “He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” And this also makes the gospel unprofitable to ourselves: “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,” Heb. iv. 2.—Embrace these tidings joyfully and thankfully; they are tidings of great joy, and should be received with the greatest joy and cheerfulness; as a malefactor on the scaffold should receive the tidings of a pardon, or as an indemnity would be received by those who have forfeited their lives by their treason. And the greater the danger is from which the gospel proclaims deliverance, the more welcome should the tidings be.—Finally, lay the weight of your souls on these tidings for time and eternity, fall in with the gospel-contrivance, and embrace the covenant as well ordered in all things and sure, Matth. xiii. 44. Embrace the salvation; come away with the Redeemer, accept the ransom, accept the indemnity, put your case in the hand of the great Physician,

fician, and all shall be well. To prevail with you as to this, consider, for MOTIVES,

From whence the tidings come. It is from a far country, from heaven, the throne of God, yea, the depths of the counsel of God, John, i. 18. Behold tidings of love and good will from heaven, of a mercy-seat set up there for poor sinners, from whence they could have looked for nothing but wrath!—Consider,

Who brings the tidings, the Son of God. O ! glorious messenger, who left the Father's bosom and came down into this earth, to proclaim the glad tidings. And now that he is ascended into heaven, he has sent his ministers in his name to proclaim them, with this certification, That he who heareth you, heareth me ; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.—Consider,

What are the tidings. Tidings of a salvation, a redemption, &c. They are good tidings, the best of tidings that ever came into the world.—Good to refresh and revive the spirits of those whom nothing else can comfort, even sinners depressed under apprehensions of wrath. And the more to be esteemed that they are peculiar to sinful men, not fallen angels. “Unto you, O men ! I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.”—Consider,

The need there was of these tidings in the world. Never did tidings come so seasonably to any, as those of the gospel to the world ruined by sin. We were as Isaac, with the knife at our throat, when the tidings came of Jesus Christ, as the ram caught in the thicket. Let us but suppose the world without the gospel, we will then have a fiery law, flaming on our faces, and no way

way whatever to escape. Thus will we see the reasonableness of gospel tidings.

To meek poor ones, in particular, I would say, O! sensible sinners, pressed with the sense of your spiritual wants, your sinfulness, misery, inability to help yourselves, you who see your absolute need of Christ, and withal your unworthiness of his help, who are longing for supply, and content with Christ on any terms, to you is the word of this salvation sent, particularly; come away, and joyfully embrace these good tidings. To influence you to this, consider,

That your names are particularly in Christ's commission. He was sent to preach good tidings to the meek. The Lord knows that the poor convinced sinner will have many doubts and fears, which will be hard for him to overcome, so as to get the tidings believed. Therefore, as in Mark, xvi. 7. the angel said unto the women, "Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." So here particular notice is taken of the meek. God has a special eye on the outcasts of Israel to bring them in to himself, Isa. lv. 1. Again, consider,

That the grand end for which the Lord discovers to you your spiritual poverty is, that you may come to Christ for supply: Gal. iii. 24. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." God brought a famine on Jacob's household in Canaan, when there was corn in Egypt, that Joseph's brethren might have an errand to him. Therefore reject not the counsel of God against yourselves. Consider farther,

That Christ is able to supply all your wants: "Open thy mouth wide, says he, and I will fill it,"

it," Pſal. lxxxii. 10. Were your wants as great as Paul's, as Mary Magdalene's, as Manaſſeh's were, he has enough to ſupply them all, a fulneſs of merit and of Spirit. If all the world were ſo poor in ſpirit, there is enough for them all, and to ſpare; there is an infinite value in his blood, and an infinite efficacy in his Spirit. Conſider,

That you cannot get the ſupply of your wants any where elſe: Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there ſalvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved." Alas! poor ſinners are ready to go to wrong doors for ſupply, and to ſeek to have their wants ſupplied by themſelves. But all your duties, prayers, watchings, mournings, will do no good, unleſs you believe: John, vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent." Conſider, laſtly,

That our Lord makes you welcome to him and his fulneſs, and that freely, Iſa. lv. 1. I dare not come to Chriſt, ſays one. Why ſo? Chriſt is a gift, even the gift of God, John, iv. 10.; and what is freer than a gift? Nothing is required of you but to receive it. Incline then your ear, and come unto him, hear, and your ſouls ſhall live.—Amen.

JESUS

JESUS BINDS UP THE BROKEN HEARTED.

SERMON L.

ISA. lxi. 1.—*To bind up the broken hearted.*

IN these words, we have another piece of work which the Father has put in Christ's hand. He hath sent him *to bind up the broken hearted*. In the words there is, 1. The work itself, *to bind up*; Luke hath it *to heal*, chapter iv. 18. He is employed by the Father as the great Physician to bind up finners, as a surgeon does a broken bone or any other wound, and to heal them. This belongs to his priestly office. We have, 2. The objects of it; *the broken hearted*, such as are sick of sin, who have their hearts broken and cast down within them, on account of sin, and its consequences. This is a sickness which Christ is sent to cure.

From this subject, you may observe the following

Doc.

DOCTRINE, Our Lord Jesus is appointed of his Father, to be the Physician of broken-hearted sinners, to bind them up, and heal them.

FOR illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. What is that brokenness of heart, which is here meant.

II. What is it in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken hearted.

III. What sort of a heart a broken heart is.

IV. How the Lord Christ binds up, and heals the broken-hearted.

V. Make some improvement.—We are then,

I. To inquire what is that brokenness of heart which is here meant, and of which the Lord takes so much notice. The broken hearted is of two kinds.

1. There is a natural one, arising from natural and carnal causes merely, which worketh death, 2 Cor. vii. 10. Thus many who are very whole hearted in respect of sin, complain that their hearts and spirits are broken by their crosses, afflictions, and ill usage which they meet with in the world. Thus Ahab, Haman, and Nabal, their hearts were broken with their respective crosses. This is nothing but the crack which a proud heart gets by God's providence, when it will not bow, and is very displeasing in God's sight. This Christ will not heal, till it is broken at another rate.—There is,

2. A religious broken heart, which arises from religious causes, namely, sin and its consequences. Sin has sunk into the souls of all Adam's posterity, like a deadly poison. But most men are whole-

whole-hearted, though they carry their death about with them, because the poison has not yet begun to work. The thorn of guilt is sticking in their conscience, but they are easy, for it has not yet begun to fester. But when the poison begins to work, the heart is broken with it. Every such breaking of heart is not the sickness unto life which Christ is sent to heal. There is a twofold religious breaking of heart.—*First*, A mere legal one: Jer. xxiii. 29. “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” When the heart is broken by the mere force of the law, it is broken as a rock in pieces by a hammer, each part remaining hard and rocky still. As it breaks the heart of a malefactor, to hear his doom pronounced, that he must be hanged for his crime; so does the law break the heart of a sinner. This breaks the heart for sin, but not from it. Thus the hearts of Cain and Judas were broken, and thus the hearts of the damned shall be broken forever. Men may die of these wounds, and never be healed. But there is,—*Secondly*, An evangelical one. When not only the law does its part, but the gospel also breaks the sinner’s heart: Zech. xii. 10. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” This is that kindly heart-breaking for sin, which is an effect of gospel-grace, a sickness of which never one shall die, it is the very malady which in the text Christ is sent to cure. Sin in an ungracious soul, is like poison in a serpent, it is agreeable

to their nature, it does not make them sick at all. Though it be indeed with them as a kind of serpent, from whose killing looks men defend themselves, by holding a glass betwixt them and the serpent, which reflects the poison on the serpent himself, and so kills him. Thus, Psal. vii. 16. "The wicked man's mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall return upon his own pate." But in those in whom God has a gracious work, sin is like poison in a man, contrary to his nature, and so makes him heart-sick. Thus the true broken-hearted sinner is as sick of sin, as ever a man was of poison, which he had unwarily swallowed down, and would by all means be quit of it.—We now come,

II. To inquire what it is in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted.—There is,

1. The guilt of sin, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God. This, which cannot be taken away but by a free pardon, sickens the poor creature at the heart: Isa. xxxiii. 24. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This guilt is their burden, a burden on their backs, on their heads, on their spirits, which makes them to cry out, as in Hosea, xiv. 2. "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." They find the load, and their spirits are broken under it, as a burden which they are not able to bear.—There is,

2. The domineering power of sin, or its tyranny, by which they are led captives to it. This is breaking to them, that lusts are so strong, and they so weak, that they cannot get the mastery over

over them as they would : Rom. vii. 23. 24. " But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" For some time the yoke of sin sat soft on their necks, they walked willingly after its commandments ; but now they are weary of its dominion, averse to submit to its rule, and their hearts are broken under the weight of those iron fetters, from which they would now fain be delivered.—There is,

3. The contrariety which is in sin to the holy nature and law of God. The commandment is come into the heart, which it is inclined to obey, and so that contrariety is breaking : Rom. vii. 13. " Was then that which is good made death unto me ? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The love of God has so touched the heart, as to produce in him a considering sin to be bitter as death : The soul is wounded and cast down to think of its grieving the Spirit, trampling on the holy law, sinning against mercies, against checks and reproofs ; and accounts itself very miserable in thus requiting the Lord.—There is,

4. The indwelling of sin, and its cleaving so close to a person that he cannot shake it off : Rom. vii. 24. " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" He sees sin to be in his heart and life, and not only so, but that it is interwoven into his very nature, and not to be totally extirpated till death. He has now a sincere love to holiness, an ardent desire of perfection, Phil. iii. 13. 14. ; an hearty hatred against

sin, and an irreconcilable enmity to it : so that it cannot but be breaking to him, while he sees the unwelcome guest still within his habitation.— There is,

5. Sin's mixing itself with all he does, even with his best duties : Rom. vii. 21. " I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." In the fairest line which he writes, sin leaves a blot ; and on the purest and most sacred of God's holy things to which he puts hand, sin drops its defilement. This is breaking to a holy heart. When he reviews his duties, and sees what deadness, what want of faith and love is in his prayers, hearing, communicating, and the like, what unwatchfulness, untenderness, and ungodliness, in his daily walk, he is loathsome in his own eyes, and sick, heart-sick of his sinful self.

6. Frequent backslidings into sin, are very breaking in this case. The Lord complains of breaking by these : Ezek. vi. 9. " I am broken," says he, " with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a-whoring after their idols." And, on the other hand, they are most breaking to the sensible sinner himself : Jer. xxxi. 18. " I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." O how heavy is it to a gracious heart, to be so often falling back into evils mourned over and resolved against ! How near the heart of a sick man must it go, to be so often relapsing, after he has been in a fair way of cure. Nothing is more powerful to make one say of life, I loath it.— There is,

7. De-

7. Desertions, hidings of the Lord's face, and interruptions of the soul's communion with God. See how breaking these are, Isa. liv. 6. "For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." Sometimes the soul is brought very low by desertions, and ready to give up all for lost: Lam. iii. 18. "And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." This is a bitter root, springing up from sin, and branches forth divers ways, all of them breaking to a sensible soul.—There is spiritual deadness, Song, v. 2. Influences from heaven are restrained, and so the heart is bound up as with bands of iron and brass. They cannot either believe, love, or mourn acceptably. All that remains is a secret dissatisfaction with their own case, only a sigh or a groan, because they cannot believe, love, or practice, as they know to be required of them, saying, Isa. lxiii. 17. "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" This is breaking. Next there is, prayers shut out, Lam. iii. 8. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." While a Christian has access to God by prayer, and can pour his complaints into his bosom, whatsoever be his case, he has not so much to complain of. Thus Hannah, after she had done so, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This also encourages them to wait upon the Lord, Micah, vii. 7. But when the door of access seems to be shut, and a thick cloud is drawn about the throne, this is breaking: Lam. iii. 44. "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." This made Zion say, Isa. xlix. 14. "The Lord hath forsaken me, and

my Lord hath forgotten me." And Psal. xx. 2. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"—Again, there is wrath apprehended, the terrors of God seizing on the soul. "The arrows of the Almighty," said Job, "are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of God do set themselves against me," ch. vi. 4. This is of all terrors the most terrible, and what heart can remain whole under it? Prov. xviii. 14. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" See how Heman was broken under this, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." It made Job, a grave solid man, of extraordinary piety, cry out in the congregation, as unable to contain himself, chap. xxx. 29. 30. 31. "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls: My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."—Finally, there are temptations dogging the soul, the more vile and horrid these are, the more dreadful. Sometimes the Lord looses Satan's chains, and he is let almost loose on a Christian, 1 Cor. xii. 7. Hence there are fiery darts shot into the heart, extraordinary temptations as to faith or practice, Ephes. vi. 16.; and these, though repelled, yet coming back as if a siege were laid to the soul, by an army resolved to master the town. And when withal, one is left often to fall under these, this is most breaking to a gracious soul.—There is,

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, a Christian's sinfulness, with the bitter fruits springing from his sin; these are what are breaking to his heart.

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He is not what God would, nor what he would have himself to be. He is dissatisfied with himself, yet cannot right his case: Rom. vii. 19. "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." He brings miseries on himself by his sin, and therefore is sadly broken under the thought of his case.—We now proceed,

III. To shew what sort of a heart a broken heart is.—As to this we observe,

1. That it is a contrite or bruised heart: Psal. li. 17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Not only broken in pieces like a rock, but broken to powder, and so fit to receive any impression: So the word signifies. The heart, though before sometimes like an adamant, which mercies could not melt, nor judgements terrify, is now kindly broken and bruised betwixt the upper and nether mill-stone;—the upper mill-stone of the law, a sense of God's wrath against sin; and—the nether mill-stone of the gospel, of divine love, mercy, and favour, manifested in word and providences.—If one going to break a hard stone, would lay it firm upon another hard stone, which will not yield underneath it, then, when you strike, it will either not break at all, or if it do, it will not break in shivers: But either lay it hollow, or on a soft bed, and it will break all in shivers. Thus, lay the hard heart upon the hard law, and strike it with the most dreadful threatenings of hell and damnation, it either will not break at all, or at least it will not break small. But lay the hard heart on the bed of the gospel of mercy and love, and then let the hammer of the law strike, the heart will go asunder. Legal preaching,

preaching, which casts a vail over gospel-grace, is not the way to make good Christians. Joel lays the hearts of his hearers on mercy, then fetches his stroke with the hammer of the law, and cries, chap. ii. 13. "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." But it is the Spirit of the Lord that carries home the stroke, else it will not do.—A broken heart is,

2. A pained heart, an aching heart: Acts, ii.

37. "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Bruising or breaking a living member is not without pain. God wounds the guilty conscience, that the sinner may see and find what an evil and bitter thing sin is: Jer. ii. 19. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." The deeper that the wound is, the sorer the heart is broken.—It is pained with sorrow: Prov. xv. 13. "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." A broken heart is a sorrowful heart for sin, for the offence given to God, the dishonour put on him by it, and the evil brought on one's self. Thus the broken-hearted sinner is a mourning sinner, Zech. xii. 10. The spirit of heaviness sits down on the man, till Christ bind up his wound; his joy is turned into lamentation.—The heart is pained also with remorse for sin, Acts, ii. 37. Every remembrance of his folly gives him a twitch by the scourge of conscience. He calls himself fool and beast for so requiting the Lord. He is heartily

gly displeased with himself on that account : Job, xlii. 6. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He smites on his breast, as worthy to be pierced, Luke, xviii. 13.; and smites on his thigh, as worthy to be broken for what he has done.—Again, it is pained with anxiety and care how to be saved from sin : Acts, xvi. 30. "What shall I do to be saved?" It brings a burden of care upon his head, how to get the guilt removed, the power of it broken, and to get it expelled at length. Never was a man more anxious about the cure of a broken leg or arm, than the broken-hearted sinner is to get his soul-wound healed, and to be free of sin, which is his greatest cross.—The heart is pained with longing desires after grace : Psal. cxix. 20. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgements at all times." The broken-hearted sinner, sensible of his spiritual wants, longs for the supply of them, pants for it as a thirsty man for water; and the delay of answering these desires makes a sick heart : Prov. xiii. 12. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."—A broken heart is,

3. A shameful heart. The whole heart in sin is impudent; but the broken heart is filled with shame. Ezra said, chap. ix. 6. "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God : for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The man hangs down his head before the Lord, as not able to look up, Psal. xl. 12. He sees himself stripped of his beautiful garments, and is ashamed of his spiritual nakedness, and, with the publican, he cannot lift up his eyes. He is fallen into the mire, and is ashamed to come before God in his defilement, Isa. lxiv. 6. His vain expectations from the way of sin are baulked,
and

and so he turns back ashamed. His reproach is discovered, he is convicted of the basest ingratitude, and so is filled with shame. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed, Jer. ii. 26.—A broken heart is,

4. A soft and tender heart, for a broken and a hard heart are opposed to each other: Ezek: xxxvi. 26. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When the Spirit of the Lord breaks the heart with gospel-grace, he melts it down, and softens it, takes away that stoniness, stiffness, hardness, that cleaves to the heart in its natural state. The broken-hearted sinner, however, will very probably say, Alas! I find my heart a hard heart.—To this I answer, To find the hardness of heart, and to be weighted and grieved with it, is a sign of tenderness, even as groaning is a sign of life: 2 Cor. viii. 12. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." There is no heart in this world but there is some hardness in it. There may be tears where there is no broken heart, as in Esau, and there may be a broken and tender heart where tears are not. Try, therefore, the tenderness of your hearts by the following marks.

Are your hearts kindly affected with providences? Thou meetest with a mercy, and it is a wonder to thee that the Lord should be so kind to such an unworthy wretch. Thou sayest as Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant," Gen. xxxii. 10. It melts thy heart into an earnest desire of holiness, knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.—Again, thou meetest with a rebuke of providence, shewing thee that thou art out

out of the way, and thou darest not venture farther that way. This is a good sign: Prov. xvii. 10. "A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool."—Again, do the threatenings of the Lord's word awe thy heart, not only in respect of gross outbreakings, but in the course of thy daily walk? Isa. lxii. 2. "——but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Art thou afraid of the Lord's displeasure more than of any thing else, and must thou stand at a distance from these things which the world makes light of on that account? This is a sign of a tender heart. This reflection was comfortable to Job, chap. xxxi. 23. "For destruction from God was a terror unto me; and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Now this had a tendency to keep him free from all sin.—Finally, have the Lord's commandments an awful authority on thy conscience, so that thou art tender of offending him, and trampling on them? A hard heart can easily digest an offence against God, but a tender heart respects all his commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. A burnt child dreads the fire; and the sinner whose heart has been broken for sin dreads sin as the greatest evil. There are some who will be very tender at their prayers, it may be that they weep and pray; but then fearful untenderness appears in their ordinary walk. But shew me the person who is in the fear of the Lord all the day long, who is afraid to say or do an ill thing: I say, this is the tender person, though his prayers should be filled from beginning to end with complaints of hardness of heart; not the other: 1 John, v. 3. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."—A broken heart is,

5. A rent heart : Joel, ii. 13. " And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." The plough of humiliation and repentance is drawn through the heart, which tears up the fallow-ground, and pierces to the very soul. Many a man's heart is rent with remorse, or rather mangled, which is never thoroughly rent; and so their wound goes together again after some time, and they are as before. But the truly broken heart is rent to purpose, till the plough reach to the root of sin.

Here there may be proposed this question, What is the difference of these rentings? To this I answer, An unrenewed man's heart may be rent for sin, but it is not rent from it. The heart truly broken is not only rent for, but from sin; not only affrighted at, but framed into a hatred of it, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. " Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." The heart is so broken, that the reigning love of sin runs out of it, as water out of a cracked vessel, or as filthy matter out of a wound which is laid open. He digs deep, as the wise builder; the other, like Balaam, who professed a regard to the authority of God, but still loved the wages of iniquity.—Again, the rent of the former either closes too soon, as those who quickly fall secure again, getting ease by bribing their consciences; or it never was closed at all, falling under absolute despair, like Judas. But the other is at length healed, yet not till the great Physician takes the cure in hand. The wound is kept open, and the soul refuseth healing, till the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven, as in Lam. iii. 50. The wound is too deep to
be

be cured, but by his blood and Spirit, yet not so deep, but that some ray of hope is always left; there is a "*who* knows but the Lord will yet return?"—The broken heart is,

6. A pliable heart. The hard heart is a heart of stone, unpliable. When the Spirit breaks the heart for sin, he makes it a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Hearts which the grace of God has not touched, are like young horses not used to the saddle, young bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke; they are unpliable and unmanageable, because they are not yet broken, Jer. xxxi. 18. But if ever any good be made of that heart of thine, the Spirit of God will break it; however wild and untractable it be, the Spirit will make it pliable.—He will make it pliable to the will of his commandments, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? and what shall we do?" Acts, ii. 37. They had often heard before what they should do, but they would not comply; but now, since their hard heart is broken, they are very pliable. Many a time the sinner's heart gets such a piercing thrust in his sinful course, that one would think, surely he will comply now. Yes, but the heart is not broken yet, therefore the man will not comply, according as Solomon represents it in the case of the drunkard, Prov. xxii. 29. 32. and 34. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But if God have any thoughts of love to him, the Spirit of God will take the case in his own hand; and were he as stiff as the devil and his hard heart can make him, he will break him to that rate, that he shall ply as wax ere he have done with him. Witness Saul the persecutor,

who was so softened, that he cried, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts, ix. 6.—The heart becomes pliable also to the will of his providence: Psal. li. 4. "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be cleared when thou judgest." An unrenewed heart is a murmuring one under the hand of God, and will readily chuse to sin rather than suffer. But the broken heart will say, Give me thy favour, and take from me what thou wilt: Luke, xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Sometimes one meets with an affliction, and they cry out they are broken, they are not able to bear it. God sends them a heavier one, they are stricken till they leave off weeping, and withal opens the heart-vein to bleed for sin, and so in some sort they are made to forget their affliction. And it is their great concern to get their soul's disease healed, let God do with them otherwise as he will.—A broken heart is,

Lastly, A humble heart: Isa. lvii. 15. quoted above. The hard heart is a gathered boil; when it is broken, it is discussed. As soon as the heart is broken under a sense of sin, pride and self-conceit vanish away; and the more broken-hearted that a person is, the less proud. Paul was a proud persecutor, but the Lord laid the pride of his heart, when he broke it, Acts, ix. 4. 5. Hezekiah, in his brokenness of heart is very humble: "I shall go softly," said he, "all my years in the bitterness of my soul," Isa. xxxviii. 16. O! if the proud and empty professors of this day had a taste of this broken heart, it would soon lay their gay feathers, let out the ulcers of pride, self-conceit,

ceit, which are swollen so big in many a poor soul. It would turn the saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," unto "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It would make them think little of what they have been, of what they are, and of what they have done or suffered; little of what all their attainments, gifts, yea, and graces also, if they have any, are.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LI.

ISA. lxi. 1.—*To bind up the broken hearted.*

HAVING considered that brokenness of heart which is here meant,—what about sin the heart is broken for,—and described the nature of a broken heart,—we go on, as was proposed,

IV. To shew how the Lord Christ binds up and heals the broken hearted.—The great Physician uses two sorts of bands for a broken heart, he binds them up with inner and with outward bands.

1. With inner bands, which go nearest the sore, the pained broken heart. And these are two.—The first inner band is,

Christ's own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. The hearts of the disciples were sore broken at the news of Jesus leaving them, and it behoved them to bleed a while. But he tells them, he would

would send a healing band for their broken hearts: John, xiv. 16. "And I will pray the Father," said he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Our Lord breaks his people's hearts by his Spirit, and yet by the same Spirit binds them up again.—In the first work he is the Spirit of bondage, and some may be long under his hand this way. Hence we read of some "who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 15. The Old-Testament church had much of this Spirit, "I am afflicted," says the psalmist, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. "and ready to die, from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."—In the next work, he is the Spirit of adoption: Rom. viii. 15. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He comes quickening, sanctifying, reviving, and comforting the soul. Therefore pray with David, Psal. li. 11. 12. "Take not thy holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."—The second inner band is,

Faith in Christ, (the band of the covenant), which he works in the heart by his Spirit. Faith is a healing band, for it knits the soul, Ephes. ii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The woman with the bloody issue, when she got a touch of the hem of Christ's garments, was presently made whole. Thus the broken-hearted sinner, when he gets hold of Christ by faith, is bound up with him in one mystical body, virtue comes from him for the soul's healing. The virtue of his blood takes away guilt; the virtue of his Spirit breaks the power of sin. The apostle prescribes this healing band to the

broken-hearted jailor : Acts, xvi. 31. " Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house ;" and the more faith that there is, the band will be the stronger, and the soul the sooner healed. Much unbelief, and little faith, keep the wounds of the soul long open : Psal. xxvii. 13. " I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." A broken-hearted sinner staving off and disputing against his believing, is like a child which has a broken leg, doing what he can to tear off the bands with which it must be bound up ; but he must admit them, or his leg will never heal : John, xi. 40. " Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?" Peter walking on the water, was like to break and sink quite, Matth. xiv. 30. ; the cause was his unbelief, ver. 31. " Jesus said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?"—There are also,

2. Outward bands for a broken heart.—These also are two.

The *first* outward band is his own word, especially the promises of the gospel. This band Peter held out to the broken-hearted company, Acts, ii. 38. 39. " Repent," said he, " and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This word has a sovereign virtue for healing, Psal. cvii. 20. " He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Our Lord wraps up a promise, in a soft band of love ; and he makes them lay it to with their own hands ; and the more closely they tie

tie it about their broken hearts with the hand of faith, they will be the sooner whole. Say not, What can a word do? An encouraging word from men will wonderfully raise a carnally-dejected mind; and if so, certainly the Lord's word will heal a broken heart. A promise will be, in this case, like the opening of a box of perfumes to one ready to faint away: Song, i. 3. "Because of the favour of thy good ointments, thy name is like ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

The *second* outward band is his own seals of the covenant, Acts, ii. 38. quoted above. These seals are for our ingrafting into, and having communion with Jesus Christ, and so are most fit means to bind up hearts broken under a sense of sin, when they are partakers of these in faith. Hence many have been healed at such occasions; though indeed the water is not moved at all times, or at least the broken-hearted sinner does not always step into it. It was an ancient custom, though that will not justify it, to put a white garment on persons when they were baptised. But surely our Lord has taken off the spirit of heaviness, and given the garment of praise to many at sealing ordinances. The eunuch, after he was baptised, went on his way rejoicing. The sorrowful disciples were also made glad, when after his resurrection Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of bread, Luke, xxiv. 35. All these bands are the Physician's absolute property. The poor patient has nothing of his own to be a band to his wounds. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; faith is his work; the word and sacraments are his ordinances, and their efficacy is all from him; and thus he heals them. His kindness in this instance, we may take up in these three things.

1. They

(1.) They are justified and pardoned : Job, xxxiii. 23. 24. " If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness : Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." The sting of guilt is taken away, that poison is carried off, by a full and free pardon. Thus the sick man is whole : Isa. xxxiii. 24. " And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The blood of Christ, with which by faith the soul is bound up, cleanses the wound, and heals it : 1 John, i. 7. " But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

(2.) They are sanctified : 1 Cor. vi. 11. " And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Spirit is a sanctifying spirit ; faith a sanctifying grace : Acts, xv. 9. " And put no difference between us and them, sanctifying their hearts by faith." The sacraments are sanctifying ordinances : 1 Cor. xii. 13. " For by one Spirit, we are all baptised into one body,—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." By these the power of corruption, as to its reign, is broken ; lusts are gradually killed, and grace is made to grow.

Lastly, They are comforted : Job, xxxiii. 25. 26. " His flesh shall be fresher than a child's : He shall return to the days of his youth : He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him : and he shall see his face with joy : for he will render unto man his righteousness." All these

these bands have a comforting and also a refreshing virtue. They bring the oil of joy sooner or later to the soul. The way of the Physician in this is, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." And thus the broken-hearted eat of the hidden manna, they get the white stone, and in the stone a new name written, Rev. ii. 17.

V. IT now remains that we make some improvement of this subject.—It may be improved in uses of information,—reproof,—consolation,—and exhortation.

First, In an use of information.

1. This shews us the love and good-will of God to help poor sinners, especially broken-hearted ones. He has provided a glorious Physician for them, having remembered us in our low estate. O the love of the Father in investing his Son with this office! O the love of the Son in undertaking it! Especially considering, what it behoved him to undergo, in order to provide the medicines; his own heart had to be broken, that sinners might be healed.—We may learn,

2. The preciousness of our souls, and with all the desperateness of the diseases of sin. Sure it behoved to be a desperate disease, and the patient at the same time very precious in the Lord's sight, for which he employed such a Physician. A physician of less value than an incarnate God, would have been a physician of no value for a broken-hearted sinner. No medicine less than his blood could have been effectual, else the Saviour's heart had never been broken for blood to cure it.—We may see,

3. To whom we must go with our hard hearts. O the reigning plague of hardness of heart this day among all ranks! Ordinances, providences, mercies,

mercies, judgements, cannot break them. Alas ! There is little occasion to speak to broken-hearted sinners this day ; it is the least part of our work, to get their hearts healed. We cannot go with whole hearts, as broken. What can we do with them ? Carry them to Christ. He who can heal broken hearts, can surely break whole hearts. He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts, v. 30. A look of him would do what nothing else can do. When the Lord Jesus looked on Peter, then Peter remembered his sins, and went out, and wept bitterly, Luke, xxii. 62.—We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In an use of reproof.—This doctrine reproves and condemns,

1. Those who, when their hearts are any way broken for sin, go not to Christ, but to physicians of no value : Hof. v. 13. “ When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb : yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.” The Spirit of the Lord is at work with the hearts of many to break them for sin, who mar all by their haste to be healed, which carries them to other physicians than Christ, who may palliate the disease, but never can effectually cure it. These are,—the law, which is now weak through the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. The law may wound the soul, but can never heal it : Rom. iii. 20. “ By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Yet many go to it for healing, namely, when they go about to pacify their consciences, not by a believing application and sprinkling of Christ’s blood, but by their own prayers, vows, repentance, amendment of their ways, and the like.

like. The law indeed may give them a palliative; by these things their consciences may be blinded and bribed, but the disease is still rooted in them, and will break forth again at last, when there is no remedy, if not sooner, by the mercy of God, to prevent their final ruin.—Throng of worldly business. When Cain's heart was wounded, and he could not get out the sting which galled his conscience, he went to this physician, he went from the presence of the Lord, and built a city, Gen. iv. 16. 17. To this many run at this day, who, when their consciences begin to stir within them, fill their heads and hands with business, till they get conscience quiet. This palliates the disease by way of diversion, while it will make it only like a gathered dam, which will at length break down the wall, and overwhelm the soul with aggravated sorrows: Isa. xxx. 13. "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."—Jovial company. So Saul, in his distress of mind, instead of calling for his Bible to read on, calls for musicians to play to him. And it is not to be doubted, that many a man's convictions are drowned in the ale-house, hushed to silence at revelling-meetings, these supports of the devil's kingdom, people are so fond of; and many good motions are spoiled and laughed away. This palliates the disease by fearing the conscience, and making it senseless. But it will awaken again on them like a lion roused up, and rent the caul of those hearts which have been so healed, Hof. xiii. 6. 8.—This doctrine reproves,

2. Those who offer themselves physicians to the broken in heart, in opposition to Christ and his method of cure. There are such agents for the devil, who, like the Pharisees, will neither

enter

enter in themselves, nor suffer those who would to enter. Like Elymas the forcerer, they seek to turn away men from the faith, Acts, xiii. 8. They no sooner discern any beginning seriousness in others, but they set themselves to crush it in the bud by their wicked advices, mockings, taunts, and licentious ensnaring examples. To these I may say, as in Acts, xiii. 10. "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" The blood of the souls of such as perish by these means will lie at the door of such persons, and be required of them.

Lastly, Those are reproved, who, as their duty is, dare not go to these physicians of no value, yet do not come to Christ, which is their sin: Psal. lxxvii. 2. "My soul refused to be comforted." It is unbelief which makes it so, and Satan will do what he can to carry it on, to deter the sinner from the great Physician. But has the Father accepted Christ a physician for broken-hearted sinners? Surely, then, they may come, and welcome; nay, they must come, or else they will never be healed.—We shall now improve the subject,

Thirdly, In an use of comfort to these who are truly broken-hearted for sin in a gospel-sense. You have an able Physician, who both can and will cure you, even though Satan may be ready to tell you that your case is past cure. There is great ground of comfort for such. (1.) Your name is in Christ's commission. (2.) You know your disease, and this is a considerable step to the cure. (3.) Never any died of your disease: Psal. cxlvii. 3. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up

up their wounds."—Here, however, may be proposed this

Objection, My heart has been long broken for sin, and yet there is no appearance of being healed: Jer. xiv. 19. "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we have looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble."—To this I

Answer, Thy soul may be healed of the disease of sin, and thy guilt removed, even the power of sin may be broken, though thy trouble does remain. David's sin was put away, 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet he cries out of broken bones, Psal. li. 8.—I would advise you to wait patiently on the great Physician, and in due time he will bind thee up. Limit him not to times and seasons, which are in his own hand; he best knows how to manage his patients. Some he keeps long in trouble, to prevent pride and security, into which they are apt to fall: others he soon cures, to prevent despair or utter despondency, to which they are most liable.—It only remains that this subject be improved,

Lastly, In an use of exhortation.—This shall be addressed to three sorts of persons.

I would exhort whole and hard hearted sinners to labour to get broken hearts, hearts kindly broken for sin.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I offer the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. Consider the evil that there is in hardness of heart.—It is very displeasing in the sight of God: Jesus was grieved with the hardness of men's hearts, Mark, iii. 5. It grieves his Spirit, and highly provokes him, so that God is ever angry with the hard-hearted sinner. Suppose a man to be under never so great guilt, but his heart is broken

ken on account of it, God is not so displeased with him as with those who, whatever their guilt be, are hard-hearted under it.—It fences the heart against receiving any benefit by the means of salvation. Till this hardness be removed, it makes the heart proof against ordinances and providences: Pſal. xcv. 8. “Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.” Consider, as it is with the dead tree, even in the spring, all labour is lost upon it; so is it with the hard-hearted sinner. God speaks by his word and Spirit, by mercies and judgements; but nothing makes impression on the hard heart, yea, the most softening means leave it as they found it, or most probably in a worse state.—It binds up the heart from all gracious motions: Rom. ii. 4. 5. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.” This hardness is an iron band on the will, a stoniness in the heart, a hard freeze on the affections, so that the sinner cannot repent, mourn, or turn from his evil courses. It so nails him down in his wicked way, that he cannot move God-ward, cannot relent of his folly, though his danger be clearly before his eyes.—In a word, it is the highway to be given up of God. Natural and acquired hardness lead the way to judicial hardness: Rom. xi. 7. “The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” When men harden their hearts against reproofs and warnings, God many a time visits them with a curse, so that they shall never after have

have power to relent and yield : Hof. iv. 17 :
 " Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone."

Mat. 2. Consider the excellence of a broken heart. It is very pleasing in the sight of God, and precious : Psal. li. 17. " The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He looks to such, while he overlooks others, Isa. lxvi. 2. He is near to them, while far from others, Psal. xxxiv. 18. It is the way to get good of all the means of salvation ; and it is the root of gracious motions in the soul. However low they lie, God will take them up, and take them in : Psal. cxlvii. 3. " He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Mat. 3. The hardest heart will break at length, if not in a way of mercy, yet in a way of judgement : Prov. xxix. 1. " He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Heb. broken, and no healing). Thy sins are breaking to the Spirit of God, Ezek. vi. 9. Assure thyself that the stone will roll back on thyself sooner or later ; if it do not kindly break thee in a way of repentance, it will grind thee to powder in the way of wrath.—To such we would give the following directions briefly.

Believe the threatenings against sin, and apply them : Jonah, iii. 5. " So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." This belief worketh fear, and fear worketh sorrow. And though this be but legal humiliation, yet this is ordinarily a mean sanctified of God to bring forward the elect sinner to Christ, as it was when Noah builded the ark, Heb. xi. 7.—Ponder thy manifold sins, on the one

hand, and the rich mercies with which thou hast been visited on the other. This is a proper mean to bring the heart into a broken disposition: Rom. ii. 4. "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Believe and meditate on the sufferings of Christ for sin. Look how he was broken for it in a way of suffering, till thy heart be broken for it in a way of repentance: Zech. xii. 10. (quoted above).

We address ourselves, in the next place, to broken-hearted sinners. To such we say, Come to Christ as a Physician for binding up and healing your broken hearts. You have sufficient encouragement to put your cases in his hand.—It is a part of the work expressly put upon him by the Father, to bind up your wounds.—He has a most tender sympathy for such broken-hearted ones: Isa. lxiii. 9. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Therefore let us improve this sympathy: Heb. iv. 15. 16. "For we have not an high-priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—He is very near to such, even as dwelling under one roof with them for their welfare: Isa. lxvii. 15. "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—There is a particular relation betwixt him as the Physician,
and

and the broken hearted as his proper patients; and therefore he has a peculiar care of them: Ezek. xxxiv. 15. 16. "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgement." You see that he will handle the broken hearted very tenderly: Isa. xl. 11. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young;" chap. xlii. 3. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgement unto truth."

In the last place, we would exhort those whose broken hearts Christ has healed, to take heed to the preserving your restored health. Indeed every one who seems to be healed; is not healed by the hand of the true Physician; but if your hearts are now eased, and your wounds bound up by the great Physician, you will know it by these three things.—1. You will have an appetite for spiritual food: 1 Pet. ii. 2. 3. "As newborn babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." When one begins to recover in earnest, he recovers his appetite. But such an one, say we, is not well yet, for he has no appetite; so thou art not well if thou dost want the spiritual hunger.—2. Your food will relish with you: Prov. xxvii. 7. "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Many have their qualms of conscience which they get over, but still

they have no relish for spiritual things, but for the world and their lusts. But if Christ has healed thee, he has corrected thy taste.—*Lastly*, You will be beginning to walk in the way of God. “I will run,” said David, “in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart,” Psa. cxix. 32. They who return with the dog to the vomit, shew that their disease is yet in its strength, though they are not sensible of pain.

Now, if Christ has healed you, to preserve the health of your souls, it is necessary for you,—To keep a good and regular diet. Beware of these things which formerly cast thee into soul-sickness. Peter went no more back to the high-priest’s hall, nor Judah to Tamar, Gen. xxxviii. 26. Feed there, and on these things which may tend to the soul’s health. “Behold,” said Jesus to the impotent man he had healed, “behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.” And for this cause observe your Physician’s rules in all things.—Walk circumspectly, take notice of every step you make, as one who has had a broken limb healed: Isa. xxxviii. 15. “I shall go softly,” said Hezekiah, “all my years, in the bitterness of my soul.” And beware of walking in the dark, of going forward there where you cannot discern your way by the light of the Lord’s word.—Study to increase in love to Christ, zeal for his glory, and hatred of sin.—Always keep correspondence with your Physician. Be often at the throne of grace by prayer, and keep up communion with him in the exercise of faith. “They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.”—Amen.

JESUS

JESUS PROCLAIMS LIBERTY TO THE
CAPTIVES.

SERMON LII.

ISA. lxi. 1.—*To proclaim liberty to the captives.*

HITHERTO we have had Christ's commission as it respects those who have some good in them, the meek and the broken hearted. Here is his commission with respect to those who have no good in them, but are utter strangers to him, living in their natural state. He is anointed *to proclaim liberty to the captives.*—In which words consider,

1. Man's natural state. It is a state of captivity; they are captives to Satan: 2 Tim. ii. 26. "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captives by him at his will." He is the tyrant whose captives they are, who has carried them away out of the light of God's favour, and holds them fast in his territories, being the god of this world.—Consider,

2. Christ's

2. Christ's work with respect to them, it is *to proclaim liberty* to them, Luke, iv. 18. "To preach deliverance to the captives." These are indeed the same. Luke's word for liberty or deliverance, is properly dismissing or letting away, that is, giving liberty. The words for preaching and proclaiming, signify properly to cry, and are used either of preaching or proclaiming. And what is preaching but proclaiming in the name of the King of heaven? and so this relates to Christ's kingly office.—From this part of the subject we take the following DOCTRINES.

DOCT. I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

DOCT. II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives.

WE begin with,

DOCT. I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

FOR illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. How sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives.

II. What is their condition as Satan's captives.

III. The properties of this captivity.—And then,

IV. Add the improvement of the subject.

WE are then,

I. To shew, how sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives.—They have become his captives,

I. As

1. As taken in war: 2 Pet. ii. 19. "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Satan having proclaimed war against Heaven, maliciously set on our first parents in paradise, and on all mankind in them. He set on them as the confederates of heaven, and carried his point, gained the victory. And in this respect he is still pursuing the victory, and driving the unrenewed world before him as prisoners of war, called his lawful captives, Isa. xli. 24.—They have become his captives, because,

2. They are born his captives, as being born of those whom he overcame and carried captive. So they are expressly called the children of hell, Matth. xxiii. 15. There were many of the captives in Babylon, who had never seen Canaan, having been born in that country. These were captives no less than their parents; and that by their birth. So is it with all Adam's posterity naturally, they were born under the power of Satan, Acts, xxvi. 18. When a slave, under the law, married in his master's house, though at the end of seven years he got his own freedom, yet the children were his master's as being born in his house, and could not be free without a particular liberty for them, Exod. xxi. 4. Thus even the children of godly parents are by nature Satan's captives; children of Abraham, children of the devil. To the Jews, our Saviour said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do," John, viii. 44.—We were,

II. To inquire what is their condition as Satan's captives.—Upon this we observe,

1. That every natural man is transported from their primitive soil into Satan's territories, his kingdom of darkness. Hence believers are said

said "to be turned from the power of Satan unto God." Acts, xxvi. 18. And again, Col. i. 13. "God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Sinners are not now where God at first set them down, they are transported into another kingdom; like the prodigal, they have left their father's house, and gone into a far country, where they have spent their substance, Luke, xv. 13. They are far from God, his covenant, and his Son. Thou art in Satan's kingdom, O unconverted soul! a black and dismal kingdom, where sin, darkness, and death reign, where there is no gleam of saving light or life; and if thou wert awakened out of thy dream, thou wilt see matters so situated; a kingdom with which God will have war for ever; and thou art an unhappy subject of that kingdom.

2. They are plundered and robbed of all that is valuable, as captives used to be: Rev. iii. 17. "They are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections; all is lost, all has become a spoil, and a prey to the hellish conqueror. Now thou art a poor captive, who hast nothing truly good left thee, nothing which the bands of hell have not made thee render up.

3. They are stripped, as has also been an ancient custom of dealing with captives. Thus, as the prophet Isaiah, ch. xx. 3. 4. walked three years naked, for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia; so did the king of Assyria carry away these nations captive, naked and bare-foot. What a melancholy sight is it, to see brave men, who were glittering in shining apparel and arms
at

at the commencement of an engagement, when fallen into the hands of their enemies, stript and driven away naked before the conquerors. But yet more melancholy to see precious souls stript by Satan of their original righteousness, and driven away before him, without any covering but rags, filthy rags, Rev. iii. 17. This, O sinner! is the shameful and dangerous case, which thou art in as Satan's captive.

4. They are no more masters of themselves, but under the power of the conqueror: 2 Tim. ii. 26. "They are taken captive by him at his will." Their liberty is gone, and they are slaves to the worst of masters. Wonder not that many a poor sinner is at Satan's beck, over the belly of reason and conscience, to serve the devil, to their own visible ruin. Alas! they are captives, not at their liberty, but must go as he commands them: Rom. i. 23. "There is a law in their members, which bringeth them into captivity to the law of sin and death."

5. If they get any thing that is valuable, they cannot get it kept, it is torn from them by the conqueror. As the Babylonians wasted and insulted the Israelites, when they carried them away captives, so does Satan waste and insult his captives, Psal. cxxxvii. 3. Sometimes the natural man gets a conviction of sin or duty darted in on him, and this produces relentings for sin, and resolutions to amendment of life; but they do not continue. Alas! how can they, while they are Satan's captives, who will not suffer them to think of entertaining them, more than Pharaoh would endure the Israelites to think of leaving his service. Nay, he rests not till they have thrown them away.

6. They

6. They are so secured, as that they cannot get away, they are kept by the strong man under the power of darkness, Col. i. 13. There is a gulf fixed between them and all spiritual good, so that they cannot pass. Satan has his guards on them, whom they cannot escape to come back to the Lord. He has them fettered with divers lusts, which they cannot shake off. And, in a word, nothing less than a power stronger than all the powers of hell, can make way for the deliverance of a captive.

Lastly, If they but offer to make escape, they are more narrowly watched, stronger guards set on them, and more work put in their hands; as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, the devil does with his captives, Rom. vii. 9. 10. 11. Hence many never go so far wrong, as on the back of communions, convictions, or times of more than ordinary seriousness, the powers of hell being joined together to stop the fugitive.—We now proceed,

III. To speak of the properties of this captivity. Here we observe, that it is,

1. A spiritual captivity, a captivity of the soul. The soul is the most precious part of the man: and therefore the captivity of it must be the most deplorable. All the captivity of men, if they were captives to the Turks or the most barbarous nations, extends but to the body. He whose body is in the power of another, his soul and thoughts are as free as those of any. But Satan lays his bands upon the inner man, and, go the body as it will, he holds fast the man, in so far as he holds fast the soul. And,

2. It is universal. It extends to all the powers
and

and faculties of the soul, the inner man. The natural man's mind is Satan's captive: 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Lord formed the mind of man in him, and endowed it with knowledge, to be the guide of the whole man in the way of happiness; to be the eye of the soul, to distinguish betwixt sin and duty; and the pilot, to direct his course through the several rocks and quicksands that lay betwixt him and the shore of the upper Canaan. But in the engagement betwixt Satan and mankind, being wounded by the deceit of the tempter, Gen. iii. 5. it fell into the hands of the enemy, who robbed it of its light, and shut up sinners in darkness. Hence they are said to be darkness, Eph. v. 8. They cannot see the way to escape: and withal, there is struck up a false light in the mind, which, like wild-fire, leads the soul into pits and snares, causing it to put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet, good for evil, and evil for good. They thus "glory in their shame, and mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 19.—Again, the will is his captive. They have a stony heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 16. The Lord having endowed this faculty with righteousness, and straightness with his own will, for, Eccl. vii. 29. "God made man upright," gave the will dominion over the man, that nothing, good or evil, could be done by him without it. But behold it fell likewise into the enemy's hands, who hath given it such a fet to the wrong side, that no created power can again straighten it: Hence, 2 Thes. iii. 5. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." He only can do it. Satan holds it so fast, that it cannot move without the

circle of evil he has drawn about it, nor can it will any thing truly good in a right manner: Phil. ii. 13. "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Satan hath loaded it with such heavy chains, that it cannot come to Christ at his call, more than a mountain of brass can come to a man at his call. "No man," saith Jesus, "can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him."—Farther, the affections also are Satan's captives: Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The affections being made perfectly holy, were subjected to the guidance of the mind, and the command of the will, and were set in the soul to execute its holy contrivances and will. But they also were taken in this war with hell; loosed from this bond of subjection to the understanding and will in these things, but nailed to Satan's door-posts to serve him and his work in the soul for ever; so that they have no heart for the price put into their hand to get wisdom, and can have no heart to it. But the natural man's joys and delights are arrested within the compass of carnal things, together with his desires, sorrows, and all his other affections.

3. It is a hard and sore captivity. The Egyptians and Babylonians never treated their captives at the rate Satan does his. They are held busy, and even busy working their own ruin, kicking against the pricks, digging for the grave as for hid treasures. It is their constant work to feed their lusts, to starve their souls; and the design of their master is, that the one may ruin the other. It is their daily employment, to weave snares for
their

their own feet, twist cords to bind themselves over to destruction, and dig pits into which they may fall, and never rise again. In so far as sin is their work, they wrong their own souls, Prov. viii. 36. and shew themselves in love with death.—This captivity is,

4. A perpetual captivity. A few years captivity among men, how grievous is it ! And men will do what they can to be ransomed. But this conquerer will never quit his captives, unless they be taken from him by Almighty power. Death at farthest looses other captives : “ For in the grave,” says Job, iii. 18. 19. “ the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor ; and the servant is free from his master.” But those who die Satan’s captives are so far from being free, that they are ensured to him for ever and ever.

Lastly, It is a voluntary captivity, and thus the more hopeless : 1 Tim. ii. 26. “ They are taken captive by Satan at his will.” They need not to be driven. They do not only go, but they run at his call : Rom. iii. 15. “ Their feet are swift to shed blood.” Though they were taken in war, and born captives, yet now he is their master, by their own consent and choice, while they chuse to serve the devil, and cannot be brought to give themselves to the Lord. It is a bewitching captivity. The sinner once captive to Satan, never cares for his liberty, unless grace changes his heart. He glories in the badges of his slavery ; loves his work heartily, and is well pleased with his condition. The gracious proclamation of liberty by Christ sounds in his ears ; but he says, I love my master, I will not go out free.—We are now,

IV. To make some practical improvement,
First, In an use of conviction. Know then, and be convinced, O unconverted sinner! that thou art the devil's captive. Are there not many who have never troubled their heads about their state, who never have had any thing like a work of grace or conversion upon their spirits? many in whom their hopeful beginnings have been all marred? I would say to every such one, Thou hast been hearing of the case of the devil's captives, and thou art the man, thou art the woman, as fast in his power as ever prisoners of war were in the hands of their conquerors. You will not believe it, and this is your sin, and also your misery, Rev. iii. 17. You will be ready to sign yourselves, and defy the devil; though you have never been, by regenerating grace, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Col. i. 13. But this is Satan's way with his captives, to put out their eyes: 2 Cor. iv. 4. "He blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" that they cannot know where they are, or who it is that has got hold of them. Do you think, that it is only witches and wizards who are the devil's captives? No, no, Satan may have a full possession of thy soul, though his name with thee be not Legion. Even praying people, and great pretenders to religion, to righteousness, and sobriety, and those who have turned to a strict course of life, much more to making a profession of religion, may still be children of hell, as our Saviour called the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 15. And all unregenerate ones are children of wrath, and the devil's captives. He is "the spirit that now worketh in the children
of

of disobedience ;” and they are “the children of wrath,” Eph. ii. 2. 3. Will you apply what was spoken before for your conviction?—Try yourselves.

1. Art thou not, O unconverted sinner ! carried off from God’s gracious presence, into the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness ? What knowest thou of the light of God’s countenance shining on thy soul ? Certainly thou wast once darkness, Eph. v. 8. Has there any spiritual saving light broke up in your soul yet ? Has the long night of thy natural state had a morning yet ? Or are you not in the state in which you was born ? If you be not in darkness, what means your works of darkness, and your not discerning the transcendent excellence of Christ ?

2. Are you not robbed and stripped of your spiritual ornaments ? Where is the light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections, which man had before he fell into the enemy’s hands, and which are restored in some measure to the ransomed of the Lord ?

3. Are you free to righteousness ? are you not under the power of the conqueror ? How is it then that you have no power to resist a temptation, that Satan can so easily carry you the way you know to be wrong, over the belly of reason and conscience ? Nay, are not your lusts upon you like fetters, that you cannot move away from carnal things God-ward ?

4. Are you not quickly spoiled of any beginnings of good which you sometimes meet with ? You hear the word, but do not the fowls pick it away from you ? Have not all your convictions and resolutions gone off by degrees like a morning cloud ? How quickly has all the noise within your

breast been hushed, and you as much again in love with your lusts as ever !

Admit the conviction, then, for they who never saw themselves Satan's captives are never yet made Christ's free-men, John, viii. 32. 33. 44. 45. What think you, is the work of grace carried on in the soul as a morning-dream ? Are the devil's captives brought away, and never know that they were his captives ? What way can a soul embrace the proclaimed liberty to the captives, who never saw itself in this condition ?—Consider, that this will be the first step to your liberty. The gospel is sent “to open your eyes, and to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ,” Acts, xxvi. 18. Christ's Spirit begins his work with conviction of sin and misery. He makes the captives to see where they are, whose they are, and what is their case. This rouses them out of their lethargy, makes them prize this liberty ; it makes them glad to come away with their deliverer : “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.”—This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of exhortation.

O captive exiles ! hasten to be loosed, that you may not die in the pit, and that your bread may not fail, Isa. li. 14. Stir up yourselves to regain your liberty, and remain no longer at ease in your captive condition.—Consider,

1. That a short time's continuance in this state will put you beyond a possibility of liberty : Eccl. ix. 10. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” Thy life is uncertain, and
if

if death carry thee off in this condition, thou wilt be carried to the lower prison, and then farewell liberty for ever and ever: Luke, xiii. 24. 25 "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are." The servant under the law, who, though he refused his liberty at the end of six years, yet received it in the year of jubilee. But whoso in this life refuse to come away from Satan's service, shall never see a time after for it. And when thou 'art closed up in the net, it must be without remedy; it will be no comfort to think that you did not imagine it would have come to this.—Consider,

2. That now is the time of liberty: 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" Christ has paid a ransom for Satan's captives, and the liberty is proclaimed in the gospel. Strike in with the season of grace, and come away with the Deliverer upon the gracious proclamation. Hear what Christ is saying to you, Song, ii. 10. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LIII.

ISA. lxi. 1.—*To proclaim liberty to the captives.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, spoke to the first of the doctrines which we took from this part of the subject, we go on to

DOCT. II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives: *He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives.*

IN illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

- I. Shew what this proclamation is.
- II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.
- III. Mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation. And then,
- IV. Subjoin the improvement of the subject.

WE

WE are,

I. To shew what this proclamation is. This royal proclamation issued out by Jesus Christ, is the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. The gospel is the proclamation of the King of heaven to poor sinners, in which he proclaims liberty to all the captives of Satan, to whom it comes. The law lays the heavy yoke of the curse upon sinners, the gospel brings the offer of liberty. — Here we observe,

1. That it is a jubilee-proclamation. You have the law of jubilee, which was every fiftieth year, when seven times seven were over: Lev. xxv. 10. "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man into his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." It was proclaimed by sound of trumpet, on the day of atonement, ver. 9. then all the poor slaves got their liberty, whether their masters were willing to part with them or not; and all those who had been obliged to mortgage or sell their lands returned to the possession of them again. And so it was a proclamation which made many a heart glad. Now, the gospel is such a proclamation, and the time of it is a year of jubilee. Jesus came, Isa. lxi. 2. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn;" compare 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" O! good news, sinners, there was a day of atonement on the cross, and now the trumpet of the gospel soundeth, and there is a proclamation, bearing that Satan's captives may now have their liberty, tho' their master be not willing to part with them; that

that the mortgaged inheritance of heaven and God's favour, though forfeited, may be possessed; poor criminals and bankrupts may return to them again.

2. It is a conqueror's proclamation to captives. The king of Babylon took the Jews captive, and held them seventy years in captivity; but God raised up Cyrus, Isa. xlv. 1.—4. and he overturned the Babylonian empire; the destruction of that kingdom was the deliverance of the Jews, for he proclaimed liberty to them to return to their own land. This also was a type of the gospel-proclamation. Satan warred against mankind, he carried them all captive into his own kingdom; and there was none to deliver out of his hand. But King Jesus has engaged him, routed all his forces, overturned his kingdom, and taken the kingdom to himself: Col. ii. 15. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." 1 John, iii. 8. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And now being settled on his throne, his royal proclamation is issued out, that Satan's captives may again return into the kingdom of God.

WE shall now,

II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.

This is the great subject of the proclamation; and that you may see the riches of this proclamation, *know* that Christ by the gospel proclaims to every poor sinner to whom it comes,

1. Liberty from the power and slavery of Satan: Acts, xxvi. 18. "He turns them from the power of Satan unto God." Every one who is willing

willing to quit their old master the devil, may come away without his leave. You are welcome to Jesus the conqueror, and the conquered tyrant shall not have power to keep you. Now, "the Spirit and the bride say unto you, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. He is a strong one, but there is a stronger one than he, who will break his yoke from off your necks, make his iron fetters to give way, like ropes which are burnt with fire. And though, as long as you are here, he will be molesting you, yet he shall never, never gain his former power over you, and you shall at length be completely freed from the least molestation by him: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom. xvi. 20.—He proclaims,

2. Liberty from the law as a covenant of works: Rom. vi. 14. "You are not under the law, but under grace." Satan's captives are under the law as a covenant of works, and it lays a heavy yoke upon them, namely, perfect obedience, under the pain of the curse, Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." This curse they carried away with them when they went into captivity, and it abides on them always, till they be loosed from it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this curse, offers to bring sinners from under the dominion of the law, to be under grace, where there is no more curse: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Here they are provided with a righteousness imputed to them, and not set to seek it by their own works; where,
in

in case of sinning, the utmost penalty is fatherly chastisement, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—33. Thus he offers to take off the law's yoke, to set you without the reach of its curse, and to lay on his own yoke, which is easy, Matth. xi. 29.—Jesus proclaims,

3. Liberty from the dominion and bondage of sin: Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Satan's captives are all the drudges of sin. It does not only dwell in them, as it does in the best, but it reigns over them, fills their hearts and hands continually with its work, so that they can do nothing else but sin: Psal. xiv. 3. "There is none that doeth good, no not one." It lays its commands on them, which are a law which they cannot dispute, but must obey; it has its several lusts in the heart, which are chains to them as its captives, the handles by which it holds them, and drags them after it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this, and his Spirit effects it: Rom. viii. 2. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death." He will break sin's dominion, loose the chains of unmortified lusts, and set the prisoners free: John, viii. 32. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And though sin may dwell for a season, as an unclean, unwelcome guest, he will at length extirpate it wholly. He proclaims,

4. Liberty from the ruining influence of this present evil world: Gal. i. 4. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." This world has a ruining influence on Satan's captives. The things of this world work their destruction, the smiles of it are killing: Prov. i. 32. "The prosperity of fools shall

shall destroy them ;" their blessings are turned to curses ; the frowns of it are ensnaring and destructive. The god of this world mixes every cup with poison. The men of this world are ruining one another ; and therefore it is said, " Save yourselves from this untoward generation," Acts, ii. 40. There is a plague in Satan's family, and each member serves to infect another, to convey sin and death to his fellow. But Jesus proclaims liberty from this pest-house ; you may be drawn out of it, Jesus will pluck you as a brand out of the fire ; why stay in it, while he proclaims liberty to you from it ?—Jesus proclaims,

5. Liberty from the fear, the terror of death and hell : Heb. ii. 15. " He delivers them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan's captives may for a time be secure, fearing nothing ; but as soon as their conscience awakens, they will be filled with horror, as perceiving the approach of death and hell towards them ; they can have no comfortable view of another life. Christ proclaims liberty from this ; if you will come to him, conscience shall be pacified with the sprinkling of his blood, ye shall be set beyond the possibility of perishing ; he will be to you an Almighty Saviour.—He proclaims,

6. Liberty from the sting of death and the evil of afflictions. Though Christ, in his gracious proclamation, does not promise that such as obey his will in it shall never be afflicted ; yet he promises that afflictions shall be so far from doing them hurt, that they shall do them good : Rom. viii. 28. " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose:" That though they die, death shall be to them untinged,

John, viii. 51. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." So that they may meet it with that triumphant song, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" It shall not be to them what it is to Satan's captives; the serpent's sting, with which it kills the serpent's seed, shall be taken away ere it comes near them.—Jesus proclaims,

7. Liberty from the power of the grave: 1 Cor. xv. 55. quoted above. Ver. 57. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Satan's captives are laid up in their graves as in prisons; and when they come out of them at the resurrection, death and the power of the grave will be still hanging about them; so that they shall but change one grave for a worse, namely, for the lake of fire. But Christ's ransomed ones, who come away on his proclamation of liberty, though they go to the grave, yet the power of it over them shall be broken, death shall have no more power over them for ever.—He proclaims,

8. Liberty from condemnation: Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." All Satan's captives are condemned malefactors: John, iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." And the sentence shall be solemnly pronounced against them at the great day; and so they shall be led away "into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matth. xxv. This is terrible; but Christ proclaims liberty from it. So soon as thou embracest the offered liberty, the guilt of eternal wrath shall be done away, thou shalt be beyond the reach of condemnation; your standing on the right hand is secured, and the sentence

tence of solemn absolution shall follow.—He proclaims,

9. Liberty of free access to God, with holy boldness: Rom. v. 1. 2. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Now, the captive exiles are banished from the presence of God; they can have no access to him, nor communion with him. But our Lord, by his death, has opened the two-leaved gates of his Father’s house, and gives free liberty, by open proclamation, to Satan’s captives, leaving their master to come in. They have access by one Spirit to the Father.—Jesus proclaims,

Lastly, Liberty, that is, freedom of spirit in the service of God: 2 Cor. iii. 17. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Spirit of Christ is called a free spirit, because he makes free. Satan’s captives may yield some obedience to God; but it is burdensome, because they act therein as slaves, from a slavish fear of hell and wrath. But Christ’s free men act from a nobler principle, love: Rom. viii. 15. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father:”—1 John, iv. 18. “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love.”—We now proceed,

III. To mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation—Here we observe,

1. That the law on which it is founded was the eternal agreement of the glorious Trinity for man’s redemption. The eternal law of love and goodwill to poor sinners, by which it was provided,

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that

that upon the Son of God's laying down his life a ransom for an elect world, they should be delivered from the captivity of sin and Satan, and be made God's freemen; which the eternal Son engaged to do. Accordingly, in the fulness of time he did it, and thereby purchased their liberty.—We observe,

2. That the proclamation was drawn up, and is recorded in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit: Isa. lv. 1. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And what is the whole Bible but a declaration of this liberty, with promises to those who accept of, and threatenings to those who refuse it. The truth and reality of this declaration is sealed by the blood of Christ: "This," said he, "is the New Testament in my blood." So that there is not the least ground to doubt its truth.—We observe,

3. That this proclamation is issued out by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the consent of his Father and the Spirit. The Father has sent him to proclaim liberty to the captives. The Spirit says, Come. A whole Trinity invites Satan's captives to liberty. They have no will that the captive exile should die in the pit: Ezek. xviii. 23. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"—We observe,

4. That this proclamation is directed to men, to the sons of men: Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to fallen angels, they are excluded from the benefit of the purchased liberty. But the captives in the land of the living, these prisoners of hope, to them is the proclamation directed, without exception

ception of great, yea, even the greatest of sinners :
 Rev. xxii. 17. " Whosoever will, may take of the
 water of life freely."—Isa. i. 18. " Come now,
 and let us reason together, saith the Lord ; though
 your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as
 snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall
 be as wool." Such are invited, though they have
 often refused their liberty, and though they have
 gone back into their captivity.—We observe,

5. That the first crier of this proclamation was
 the Son of God in his own person. He made this
 proclamation first in paradise : Gen. iii. 15. " The
 seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the ser-
 pent." Afterwards he took on him man's nature :
 Then came and proclaimed it : Heb. ii. 3. " The
 gospel at the first began to be spoken unto us by
 the Lord." And he sealed it with his most precious
 blood, though there were but few who came a-
 way upon the proclamation made by him : " Who
 hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the
 arm of the Lord been revealed ?" is the complaint
 of the prophet Isaiah.—We observe,

6. That, being ascended into heaven, he has
 appointed criers in his name, the ministers of the
 gospel, to publish this proclamation, and to invite
 sinners to accept of this liberty : 2 Cor. v. 20.
 " Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as
 though God did beseech you by us : we pray you,
 in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." This
 is our work, to proclaim it unto you, to
 make you sensible that liberty is purchased, and of-
 fered unto you. We are the voice of the great
 crier ; Christ cries to you by us.—We observe,

Lastly, That the place where the proclamation
 is ordered to be made is in this world : Mark, xvi.
 15. " Go ye," said Jesus to his disciples, " into

M 3

all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." As for those who are gone into the other world, the proclamation can reach them no more; the prisoners there are without hope. But while you are in this world, the proclamation is to you, and particularly when in those public assemblies, where the Lord's people are gathered together to hear it: Prov. i. 20. 21. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words."—It only remains,

IV. THAT we make some improvement of the subject. This shall be confined to an use of exhortation.

We would exhort you, O captives of Satan! to comply with the design of this proclamation of liberty; we beseech you, receive not this grace of God in vain.—To be more particular, we exhort you,

1. To be convinced of your state of captivity, deceive not yourselves with thoughts of liberty, while you are really serving divers lusts. Till you see your captive state, what hope can there be of good to be obtained by the proclamation of liberty?—We exhort you,

2. To be willing to come away and forsake your old master and his service. Ah! may not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. iv. 3. You have been long under this captivity; had the youngest of you been as long a slave to any man as you have been to Satan, you would have been weary of your situation long ere now. O! strive that your spirits may be raised towards your being free, and walk no more contentedly in your chains of divers lusts. You will say,
you

you are not able to come away; but if you were willing, you would not be allowed to remain in your captive state.—We exhort you,

3: To be affected at the heart with the news of the proclamation of liberty. Do not hear it unconcernedly, but hear as those who are nearly concerned in the matter. Take a view of the wretched state you are in, and wonder that there is yet hope. How glad were the Israelites in Egypt and Babylon of the notice they had of their liberty! Thy captivity is a thousand times worse, and thy heart should leap within thee at the voice of the deliverer.—We exhort you,

Lastly, To accept of the proclaimed liberty, and come away with the deliverer. Give up with your old master, lay by his work, bid farewell to his kingdom, as never to remain more in it. Shake off your fetters resolutely, and embrace cordially the offered liberty of the sons of God.—To prevail with you in doing this, we present you with the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. Consider that the captivity you are in is a most miserable bondage and slavery; Egyptian, Babylonish, and Turkish slavery and captivity, all in one, are not sufficient to represent it. And this will appear, if you consider,

(1.) That the master is the devil. While thou art in thy natural state, thou art the devil's captive and bond-servant, 2 Tim. ii. 26. and that by a threefold title,—as taken in war, 2 Pet. ii. 19.—as bought by him at a low rate, “ye sold yourselves for nought,” Isa. liii. 3. and—as born in his house, Matth. xxiii. 15. Therefore ye are called to forget that house, Psal. xlv. 10. and to come out of his family, and touch not the unclean thing, 2 Cor. vi. 17. How wretched must that bondage be where the devil is master! Sure he is a cruel
and

and merciless master, who will take pleasure in thy miseries. Do we esteem the case of those wretches so horrible, who, by express compact, are become his? and will we yet contentedly continue in bondage to the same master?—Consider,

(2.) That the work is sin, called the works of darkness, Rom. xiii. 12. None of his captives are suffered to be idle, he puts a task in their hands, which they must fulfil. One of two things they are always doing, while out of Christ;—either weaving the spider's web, working that which will not profit at the latter end, more than such a web will be a garment; or—hatching the cockatrice-egg, doing mischief and wickedness, that will recoil upon you, to your own destruction. This dunghill-work Satan employs his captives in, is most unbecoming the heaven-born soul.—Consider,

(3.) That the provision and entertainment, is bad and unsatisfying: Isa. lv. 2. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The best of this sort, which the natural man has, is to eat dust with the serpent, to suck the breast of filthy lusts, which, though it may feast one's corruptions, poisons the soul; or to eat husks with the swine, Luke, xv. 16. to feed on the empty things of the world, which can afford no nourishment. Thus, while you ask from him bread, he gives you a stone; while you ask a fish, he gives you a scorpion.—Consider,

(4.) That the wages of this work is death: Rom. vi. 23. "For the wages of sin is death." Present death, spiritual, in the separation of their souls from God, for from every natural man God is departed, whether he knows it or not. Death temporal, to come, armed with its sting, and provided with

with the envenomed arrows of the curse. And death eternal in hell, where they shall be ever dying, but never shall die. O ! shall not the consideration of these things move you to accept of liberty, and come away from such a master, such work, such provisions, and such wages ?

Mot. 2. The liberty proclaimed is most excellent and glorious liberty, Rom. viii. 21. ; the glorious liberty of the sons of God ; which may create the most surpassing joy in the world. The glory and excellency of it will appear, if we consider,

(1.) The purchaser of it is Christ the King of glory. He it is by whom we have the gospel-jubilee proclaimed in the text. He is the victorious Monarch, who has overcome Satan, and gives liberty to his captives. He is our near kinsman, who has redeemed us by payment of a price, a costly price, even his own precious blood. It was the honour of the Jews, that they had their liberty by Cyrus ; but how much more honourable is it, to have liberty by Christ ! And when such an one has purchased for us liberty, will not you accept it ?—Consider,

(2.) The ransom paid for it : 1 Peter, i. 18. 19. “ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.” Never was such a ransom paid for the greatest captive king among men, as for us wretched sinners ; even the blood of God. He compassionated the case of the poor captives, laid by the robes of his glory, put his neck under the yoke of the law, endured the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the rage of hell, and all to purchase this liberty for us.—Consider,

(3.) The

(3.) The party to whom it was paid, to God, even his own Father : Ephes. v. 2. "He gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling favour." Satan is but the jailor and executioner, into whose hands men fell, being condemned by the Judge, to whom alone the ransom was due. Hence, in respect of Satan, his captives are said to be redeemed without money, If. lii. 3. They are to be set at liberty by main force, being violently wrested out of his hand, Isa. xlix. 25.—Consider,

(4.) The glorious privileges attending this liberty. It is not a naked freedom, which yet would be valuable, but pregnant with many precious privileges. I have told you already, that it is a liberty from the power of Satan, from the law as a covenant, &c. But besides these, many positive blessings and privileges attend it; such as, the freed captives are made free men of the New Jerusalem, they are made citizens of heaven on earth, and are burgeses there : Ephes. ii. 19. "They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." They are incorporated with the society of saints and angels, of whom Christ is the head. They who had their lot before in the kingdom of darkness, their lot then falls in these pleasant places.—The freed captives are made children of the family of heaven : 2 Cor. vi. 18. "And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." So it is the liberty of the sons of God. For God makes all the freed slaves, sons of his house; and whatever children may expect from a father, able and willing to do for them, this they may expect from God.—The freed captives are all made first-born : Heb. xii. 23. "The general assembly and church
of

of the first-born, which are written in heaven." This excellence of dignity and power is put upon them, they are thus highly advanced. As it was with Joseph, he not only got his liberty, but was made lord over Egypt, where he had been a slave: so the freed captive is made king: Rev. i. 6. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." This is accomplished in them all, Isa. xiv. 2. "They shall rule over their oppressors." They get mastery over their lusts, and shall at last triumph over Satan, Rom. xvi. 20. They shall sit and judge him, 1 Cor. vi. 3. They are made priests also, to offer up sacrifices of praise to God, Rom. xii. 1. O what a change of their work! They are all heirs of God, and receive the double portion. There is not any thing which such an one gets, but it is twice as much and good as that which a captive of Satan has. The blessing is the best half; this the captives of Satan want.—*Lastly*, When their minority is over, they shall have a perfect liberty, with the affluence of all things, to an entire completing of their happiness, Rom. viii. 21. O the glorious day abiding Christ's free men! Now they have got the word, Roll away the stone, Lazarus come forth: but then this will be added, Loose him and let him go. The great day will begin their eternal jubilee; when death the last enemy shall be destroyed, then shall soul and body return to the full possession of the mortgaged inheritance, and the perfect freedom from their captivity.—Consider,

(5.) The unchangeableness of this liberty. When once a captive is freed by Christ, all the power and policy of hell cannot bring him back again into bondage: John, x. 28. "And I will give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish;

perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." See how Paul boasts of this, Rom. viii. 38. 39. It is true, were there none to preserve this liberty but the believer himself, it might be lost; but it is infallibly guarded against the gates of hell, by the unalterable decree of God, 2 Tim. ii. 19.; by his unchangeable love and covenant; by the continual indwelling of the Spirit, and the prevalent intercession of Christ.

Lastly, Consider the eternity of this liberty. Death does not put a close to this liberty, but rather gives a new beginning to it; it shall continue for ever, they shall live for ever and ever in the enjoyment of it.

Thus life and death are set before you, will you accept this liberty or not? May I not say, "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3.—Consider,

1. That it is most unreasonable to refuse it, to remain in captivity after the proclamation of liberty is issued. Would men but make their reason judge betwixt Christ and them, there would be no fear of the cause, Josh. xxiv. 15. Who would refuse their liberty, if they might be made free? liberty from such a master and such work, &c.; liberty purchased from such a glorious person, by the glorious King, at such a ransom, &c. Consult your reason, your interest, and will you prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, to the eternal rivers of pleasures at God's right hand?—Consider,

2. That every refusal makes your captivity the more firm and hopeless. Satan bores the ear of sinners anew to his door-post on every refusal. Hence none so hard to win, as those who have refused many gospel-calls. Tyre and Sidon would be much easier wrought upon, than Chorazin and Bethsaida,

Bethsaida, Matth. xi. 21. Ezek. iii. 7.; wild Americans, than Scotsmen. For when the gospel does not soften the heart, it is hardened under it. —Consider,

3. That by refusing this liberty, you become the murderers of your own souls: Prov. viii. 39. "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Hear, sinners, how our Lord expostulates with you on this point, Ezek. xviii. 31. 32. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." You have the poisonous cup of your sins at your head, will ye drink it? ye say, ye cannot help it, ye must drink it off: Our Lord says, Throw it away, it will be your death if you do not. Come to me, and I will free you from this miserable bondage to Satan and your lusts, so that they shall not have that power over you which they have had. Well, if you will not comply, you are murderers of your own soul with a witness, as really as if ye did wilfully drink up a cup of poison, or stabbed yourselves with a sword.—Consider,

4. That if you refuse, you make the Deliverer your enemy, and shall not escape, Heb. ii. 3. The Deliverer will turn your destroyer, for neglecting his salvation. The Lamb of God will be as a lion to you, for slighting his offers of grace. They who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, 2 Theff. i. 8. 9. As the sourest vinegar is made of the best

wine, so the fiercest wrath arises from flighting the greatest grace, Prov. i. 24.—31.—Consider,

5. That ye know not how soon ye may be beyond the reach of the proclamation of liberty, Luke, xiii. 24. 25. The voice of it is not heard on the other side of death, to which we are fast making way. Do you not see, as in Psal. xc. 9. that "we spend our days as a tale that is told?" A new-year's day, and other days adjoining to it, are very ill chosen for revelling, jollity, and carnal mirth; they suit it nearly as ill, as does the pretended day of Christ's birth, commonly called Yule-day. Alas! they will give themselves the loose run in these things, because they are now a year nearer the grave and eternity than they were; because they are entered on a new year, the end of which it may be they shall never see. If people will make a difference between such days and others, it would be most suitable in these days, to take a solemn serious view of eternity, and to be making preparations for that day, which will put an end to their years. However, let this time put you in mind of death's approach, and refuse not the offer of grace, which you will have no more, when once death has carried you off the stage*.—Consider,

Lastly, That your judgement will be more grievous than that of those who never heard the gospel, if you do not come away upon the proclamation: Matth. xi. 22. "But I say unto you, It shall more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgement, than for you." Remember double stripes are for him who knew his master's will, and did it not; and the hottest place in hell

* It would appear, that this discourse was delivered the first day, or at least the first Sabbath of a new year.

hell will be for gospel-despisers. Men may have their lusts and sinful courses cheaper in the dark corner of the earth, than in a land of light.

We conclude with the following advices.— Labour to get a just esteem of your souls, and a due sense of what concerns another life. The soul is the man, as being the best part of the man, the loss of which nothing can ever counterbalance : Matth. xvi. 26. “For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” The other life is the life chiefly to be cared for, since that only is the life which will have no end; and a man is happy or unhappy, as his plan for that life is well or ill laid.— Be sensible of the real drudgery of sin. It is as real a servitude as ever was in the world, while men serve divers lusts. This is clear from the very light of nature: the consideration of the noble nature of the soul, with the experience of the tyranny of unruly passions, made some heathen moralists to lay it down as a principle, That a wise man is a free man.—Wherefore, believe that a holy life is the only true liberty : Psal. cxix. 44. 45. “So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.” He, then, who has the mastery over his own corrupt will and inclinations, who walks in the way of God’s commandments, is a person the most free and easy.—*Lastly*, Come to Christ for his redeeming blood and free Spirit. Renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. Receive and improve Jesus as made of God unto you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Amen.

JESUS OPENS THE PRISON-DOORS TO
THE PRISONERS.

S E R M O N L I V .

ISA. lxi. 1.—*And the opening of the prison to them
that are bound.*

HERE is another benefit which, in the gospel, is brought by Christ to sinners who are in their natural state, namely, a proclamation as to opening the prison to the prisoners. In this there are two things.

1. The misery of a natural state, which is here laid out in its full extent, in three particulars. You have heard that unconverted sinners are Satan's captives; this is a sad case, but it is yet worse; for,

(1.) They are also prisoners. Every captive is not a prisoner, but all natural men, being Satan's captives, are held prisoners, shut up in the prison of their natural state. This is Satan's prison, crammed full of his prisoners of war. But this is not all; for,

(2.) They are prisoners in chains, they are bound
in

in the prison. Satan has his irons on them, as malefactors under sentence of death, that they may not escape. This is still worse than being a prisoner. But worse than all this is here stated; for,

(3.) They are blinded too in their prison. For the word rendered opening, does particularly relate to the opening the eyes; and therefore the prophet uses it to express the relieving of such prisoners perfectly. This is evident by comparing Luke, iv. 18. "And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them who are bruised." It was a custom much used in the eastern nations, and retained among the Turks to this day, to put out the eyes of some of their prisoners, adding this misery to their imprisonment. So the Philistines did with Samson, Judges, xvi. 21.; and Nebuchadnezzar with Zedekiah, 2 Kings, xxv. 7. This, in a spiritual sense, is the case of all prisoners in their natural state. To sum up all, O unconverted sinner! thou art Satan's captive, a captive in prison, and a prisoner in chains; and withal thine eyes are put out, thou art in darkness, even darkness itself.—In the words there is,

2. A suitable remedy, full help proclaimed by Christ in the gospel. God has seen the misery of the prisoners, his Son has paid the ransom for them, and thereupon he is sent to proclaim the opening of the prison-doors to them, opening every way to them; for this expression comprehends the affording full remedy to their case; namely, opening their prison,—opening their chains,—and opening their eyes. By his word he offers it, by his Spirit he effects it, in all his elect.—From this subject we propose to your consideration the following DOCTRINES:

DOCT. I. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

DOCT. II. That by open proclamation in the gospel, Christ offers to the prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, of their bands, and of their prison-doors.

WE begin with

DOCT. I. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

FOR illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Speak of the imprisonment in which guilty sinners are.

II. Mention the bands, chains, and fetters wherewith they are bound in the prison of a natural state.

III. Point out the darkness and blindness of the prisoners in their natural state.

I. We are to consider the imprisonment in which unconverted sinners are.

This prison is the natural unconverted state; and thus that word, 1 Pet. iii. 19. "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison," is by some understood. However, it is plain that this is meant in our text. Thus Peter said to Simon the forcerer: Acts, viii. 23. "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Thus sinners in their natural state, are said to be all concluded under sin, and shut up under the law, Gal. iii. 22. 23. Concluded or shut up, that is, declared to be so. Let us consider, then, the natural state as a state of imprisonment.

imprisonment. Here we shall answer the three following QUESTIONS :

1. Whose prisoners are they ?
2. What are the causes of this imprisonment ?
—And,
3. In what condition are natural men, as prisoners in this their natural state ?—We begin with,

Quest. 1. Whose prisoners are they ?

(1.) Unconverted sinners are God's prisoners, as the great Judge and party whom they have offended: Rom. xi. 32. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief." There are two things in a natural state.—The sinfulness of it; they can do nothing but sin. Move they cannot without that circle, more than a prisoner out of his prison.—The misery of it. They are under the curse: Gal. iii. 10. This last, God, as a just Judge, inflicted on mankind for the breach of the covenant of works; and while this lies upon them, there can be no communion betwixt God and them, and consequently nothing but sin in them; and so they are all concluded under sin.

(2.) They are Satan's prisoners. He acts as the jailor, and is therefore said to have the power of death, Heb. ii. 14. Man, having freely yielded to Satan, and become his captive, was delivered up into his hand by the Judge. They are under the power of Satan, Acts, xxvii. 18. He keeps the keys of this prison, and watchfully marks his prisoners, that none of them escape. Nay, when the commandment is come, to deliver the elect out of his hand, he will not yield them up, till the prison-doors be broke open, and they are forcibly taken out of his hand.

Quest. 2. What are the causes of this imprisonment ?

fonment?—As to this we observe, that they are in prison,

(1.) As debtors to divine justice. Sin is a debt, and the worst of all debts; committing sin is contracting a debt, which sinners are unable to pay. But it must be paid; a satisfaction must be made to justice to the utmost farthing. As to natural men, their debt is not forgiven. All their accounts stand uncanceled. They have as yet no share in the Cautioner's payment. Therefore they are kept in this prison justly for their debt, and they cannot escape. They were laid up there for our father Adam's debt. This debt brought all mankind into the prison, Rom. v. 12. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The covenant being broken, we became liable to pay the penalty, and, being unable to relieve ourselves, were shut up in prison under the wrath and curse of God. They are also arrested there for their own debt, contracted in their own persons. Every sinful thought, word, or action, is a new item in our accounts. And at the instance of every broken commandment, the law arrests the natural man in the prison, clapping its curse upon the sinner; so that the longer one remains in their natural state, there is always the less hope of their delivery. Nay, their delivery is impossible, till the Cautioner loose all the arrests, by paying the whole debt.

(2.) They are in prison as malefactors condemned in law: John, iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already. There is a sentence of death passed upon all men in a natural state, they are condemned to die eternally; and therefore are committed to the jailor, to keep them in the prison.

prison to the day of execution, which they know not how soon it may be appointed, how soon death may lead out the prisoner to have the sentence fully executed upon him.—I go on to,

Quest. 3. In what condition are natural men as prisoners in this their natural state?—Their condition is most dismal; for,

(1.) They are under the wrath of God, as the malefactor put in prison is under the wrath of his judge. Hence it is said, Eph. ii. 3. "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." A natural state is a state of wrath. God bears a legal enmity against thee as long as thou art out of Christ. There is a black cloud of wrath which always hovers over the head of the natural man, and never will scatter till he be a new creature. God is ever angry, never pleased with him: Psal. vii. 11. "God is angry with the wicked every day."—His person is not acceptable to God: Psal. v. 5. "The foolish shall not stand in his sight, and he hateth all the workers of iniquity." Nor are his performances acceptable to God, Isa. lxvi. 3. God will have no communion nor fellowship with him: Amos, iii. 3. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There is wrath in his word, his looks, and dispensations towards him.

(2.) They are both under the dominion of the law, and also under the the lash of it: Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." It has him as fast in its hands as ever a prisoner was. It has him by the neck, saying, Pay what thou owest; and will never quit the hold through the ages of eternity, unless he get the Surety that is able to take it off his

his hand. Its demands are high, quite above his reach; perfect satisfaction for what is past; perfect obedience for what is to come. It is a merciless creditor, and will abate thee nothing. As long as thou art in its power, (and that is as long as thou art in this prison), thou must lay thy account with the payment of the utmost farthing. What though the sentence is not speedily executed? a reprieve is no pardon, Deut. xxxii. 35.

(3.) They are under the power of Satan, as the keeper of the prison, Acts, xxvi. 18. He has a commanding and a restraining power over them, 2 Tim. ii. 26. "They are in the snare of the devil, and taken captive by him at his will." They cannot move out without the bounds of his jurisdiction, more than the prisoner out of the dungeon. It is true, Satan keeps not all alike close, some have the liberty of the form of godliness, on account of which they reckon themselves secure as to the goodness of their state, and by this delusion they are held the faster in his hands.

(4.) They are in a most uncomfortable condition. If a person was in a palace as a prison, it would be uncomfortable; far more in this case, the pit wherein is no water has nothing to refresh the soul, Zech. ix. 11. It is true, most natural men are stupid, they consider it not; they are blind, and they see not the shadow of death about them. But when once their eyes are opened, there is no more rest for them there; they cry, "What shall we do to be saved?" They see the filthy prison-garments of unmortified, unpardoned sins about them, which they can no longer wear at ease. The scanty allowance of the prisoner's diet, unblest mercies, which can serve for nothing but to keep in the wretched life till the day of execution.

(5.) They

(5.) They have no security for a moment's safety; but if their eyes were opened, they would see themselves every moment in hazard of dropping into the pit of hell; see the natural man's case, Psa. vii. 11.—16. He is ever standing before God's bent bow, and has nothing to secure him for a moment from the drawing of it. He is condemned already, and the sentence is past; no day known for the execution, uncertain but every day the dead-warrant may be given out against him, and he led forth to execution. What can he see to put it off, but long abused patience which will wear out at length?

(6.) They are so secured, that they can never get away without satisfaction for their debts and crimes. There is no breaking this prison. Sooner may bars of iron and gates of brass be got over, than a prisoner can get out of the state of wrath without satisfying the demands of the law. And therefore the sinner will die in this prison, if he come not to Christ. There is no getting out of this pit but by the blood of the covenant.

For the improvement of this part of the subject,—O! Sirs, be concerned to look to the state of sin in this glass, and be ye duly affected with it, as the matter requires. Consider, sinner, where you are, and in what condition.—Is the state of sin a prison-state? Then who are the men that walk at liberty? Is it not these whose consciences are purged by faith in Christ, whose guilt is removed, who walk after the Spirit, and lead a holy, heavenly, circumspect life? Or is it those who, scorning to be bound up to the rules of a holy walk, can stretch their consciences at their pleasure, and take to themselves a sinful liberty, which others dare not for their souls, who can laugh at those things for which others mourn, and follow their
lusts

lusts to the ruin of their souls? Truly no. All that sinful liberty which those do take, and all the pleasures which they have in it, is but the rattling of the chains of the devil's prisoners, while they go up and down in their prison.—Is the state of sin a state in which ye can quietly sleep another night? It is a Sodom on which fire and brimstone will come down. Haste ye, and escape for your life. Ah! sinner, canst thou be at ease in a state of wrath? The world, it may be, smiles upon thee; it may be that it frowns; but what of either of these, while God is angry with thee every day? Thou hast perhaps something for many years for thy body, it may be nothing; but what security hast thou for thy soul, when death shall call thee hence, thou knowest not how soon?—Is the work of conversion to God a slight business, about which persons are under small necessity to trouble their heads? Surely it is a most weighty business, which, if it be not done, there is nothing at all done for eternity. Let men in an unconverted state put on what appearances of religion they will, perform what duties they will, they are but dead works, wrought in Satan's prison, and leave the worker in a state of death. Turn, turn ye, then, from your sins unto God, cry for regenerating sanctifying grace, rest not till you get it.—Will you not eagerly embrace the offer made you in the proclamation of opening the prison to these that are bound? Christ is come to your prison-door, offering by his blood and Spirit to set you free. Are you willing to come away? or are you so in love with your prison as not to care for deliverance.—We are,

II. To mention the bands, chains, and fetters,
with

with which unconverted sinners are bound in the prison of a natural state. These are twofold, God's and Satan's.—There are,

1. God's bands, for they are his prisoners; and these are heavier than the heaviest irons ever were on prisoners; for,

(1.) There are bands of guilt and the curse on them all, by which the law binds them over to wrath, Gal. iii. 10. Guilt is a bond binding over the sinner to deserved punishment. The curse of the law devotes him to destruction. These, worse than iron fetters, enter into the soul; and while they lie on persons, they cannot stir out of the prison, nor make their escape. No sooner is the soul awakened to feel them, than it feels them heavier than can be borne.

(2.) There are the bands of judicial hardness on some. Those with whom the Lord has been long dealing, who will not hear, but harden themselves against calls, warnings, and reproofs; many times the Lord judicially hardens them, makes hardness of heart their punishment, as it is their sin; recalls the motions of his Spirit, Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." He gives them over, saying, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11.; he gives them up to their own lusts, Psa. lxxxi. 12. "So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust; and they walked in their own counsels;" and he gives them up to Satan to harden them, 2. Cor. iv. 4. "He hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So that under the most softening means they grow worse and worse, harder and harder, Isa. vi.

9. 10. These are fearful bands ; but besides these there are,

2. The devil's bands, which he puts on his prisoners in their natural state, to secure them, that they may not come out of it to Christ, may not be converted, may not be turned from their sins unto God. These are many ; such as,

(1.) The band of prejudices. These are so fixed on natural men, that Jesus says, Matth. xi. 6. " Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Satan dresses up religion and true holiness in such a monstrous shape, that they are affrighted at it, they cannot wish it, they can never get a heart to it ; and therefore they entertain Christ's message, as Nabal did David's, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. ' Shall we,' say they, ' give up with that pleasant or profitable way, in which we are, and betake ourselves to a way that must needs be a continual weariness ?' This is a strong band, but when the eyes are opened, and God's ways are tried in earnest, it would break like an untwined thread : Prov. iii. 17. " Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Come and see. — There is,

(2.) The band of ill company. Satan does as the Romans did with some of their prisoners, he binds his prisoners together, so that one helps to hold fast another, to their ruin : Prov. xiii. 20. " A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Thus there are bundles of drunkards, swearers, Sabbath profaners, despisers of what is good, worldlings, to whom the world is the chief good ; and every one of the bundle is a snare to the soul of another. With an eye to this is the terrible sentence given, Matth. xiii. 30. " Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." Therefore is the gospel-invitation, Prov. ix. 5. 6. " Come,

"Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forfake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding."—
There is,

3. The band of earthly-mindedness. This held them fast who were bidden to the gospel-supper, Luke, xiv. 16.—20. The wretched world had its bands on every one of them, so that they could not stir to come. They must look to this and the other business, that they do not lose their advantage; and while the devil's servant is thus busy here and there, looking well to this and that, the immortal soul, with the keeping of which God charges him, is lost. The pleasures of the world, like Syren songs, arrest them like iron fetters covered with silk; these secure them. The cares of the world, like a thicket, entangle them, they cannot get leisure for them to mind their souls; and the weary earth ever interposing betwixt them and the Sun of Righteousness, they are thus kept in a dark prison.—There is,

4. The band of unbelief. This is such an one as no less than the arm of the Lord can take off: Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Men hear the word, but they do not believe it; they believe not the doctrine of the gospel, they count it foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. The promises they do not believe, they count them but fair words, and will not quit their certainty in a sinful course for the hope of them, Heb. iv. 1. 2. 11. The threatenings they consider as mere scarecrows, and in spite of them promise themselves peace: Deut. xxix. 19. "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart,

to add drunkenness to thirst." They believe not their need of Christ, and therefore they flight and reject him.—There is,

5. The band of slothfulness. This ties down the natural man in his prison-bed, saying, Prov. vi. 10. "Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." It hangs so heavy upon his legs, that he cannot move them in the way of God: Prov. xxvi. 13. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way." "A lion is in the streets, yet his feet are swift to evil," Isa. lix. 7. This band is so heavy on his head, that he cannot lift up his eyes; and on his hands, that he cannot lift them to his mouth for his soul's behoof: Prov. xxvi. 15. "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." This is a hellish gulph on earth, that swallows up convictions, resolutions, motions of good, and the like. They could be content to be better, if God would work with them as with stocks and stones, which are at no pains for their own polishing. They can spend whole days, and even nights, for the world and for their lusts; but to spend a day, or a considerable part of a day, in clearing their accounts, and laying down their measures for eternity, this is what they cannot be troubled with.—There is,

6. The band of delays. This held Felix fast, when the rest of the bands on him were like to give way, Acts, xxiv. 25. When trembling under Paul's preaching, he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." The prisoners, many of them, are not resolved not to come out, only they put it off, resolving to do it afterwards. The young put it off till they be old, the old till death come to their bed-side. Some make one resolution, and
some

some another, to turn to the Lord; and though the time comes which they had set, yet they still put it off again to another time; and so on, till death comes at length, and sweeps them off, ere they have power to execute their good purposes.—There is,

7. The band of delusion: Isa. xlv. 20. "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right-hand?"—They are under a fearful delusion as to their state, like Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." As one is refused admission by mistake, so Christ is often kept at the door; for the poor deluded sinner thinks he is in already.—They abide fast in the gall of bitterness, because they imagine themselves to be got out of it already. They remain unconverted, because they reckon themselves already converted. This is a most dangerous case, which should stir us all up to an impartial examination of our state: Isa. i. 11. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks which you have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."—There is,

Lastly, The band of divers lusts: 2 Tim. iii. 6. "Laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." They are laden with them, as ever a prisoner was with irons, so that by them Satan holds them fast. Unmortified lusts crawl up and down, preying on their souls, and keeping them in a state of death. They hang about them, crying, Give, give, so that they can get nothing done to purpose for eternity.

nity. And so many unmortified lusts as there are about a man, Satan has so many handles to hold him by. A lust of covetousness, of pride, sensuality, and the like, will hold a man fast.

This part of the subject may be improved in an use of lamentation.

This is a lamentation, and may be for a lamentation, over all the unconverted, as bound men in the prison of a natural state. Thou art little concerned with it, but the misery of the case deserves tears of blood. For—thou art laid up in custody at the instance of God's law and justice, as a debtor and criminal. As a debtor, thou shalt not be let out till thou hast paid the utmost farthing. But, alas! thou hast nothing wherewith to pay; men and angels cannot help thee; their united stock is not sufficient to pay off the debt of sin. As a criminal, thou canst not be let out, till thou abide thy trial; and terrible will it be whenever God calls thee to it; when thy indictment is read, and thou art tried for thy life according to law, what canst thou say? thy crimes are undeniable.—Thou canst not get out by force or fraud, slight or might. Thou art God's prisoner, as the offended party. What canst thou do or say that is not known to him who sees all things? Whither canst thou flee, where his hand will not find thee out.—Thou art Satan's prisoner as thy jailor. He has malice enough to prompt him to watch and keep thee, power enough to hold thee still. His iron-bands and chains are upon thee in the prison-house, how canst thou escape? Look to the bands on thee in the prison; look on them, and mourn, and lament thy case. There are bands on thee of God's laying on, and who but he then can take them off? for he shutteth, and no man can open, Rev. iii. 7. Thou art bound under the curse of the
the

the law, and God has bound thee ; to whom canst thou apply to loose thee ? If men lay on bands, God can loose the prisoner, whether they will or not : " The Lord looseth the prisoners," Psal. cxlvi. 7. But if God lay on the bands, the whole creation may stand and commiserate the prisoner. They may drop a tear, but neither angels nor men can loose him. There are bands on thee of Satan's laying on ; and these must be sad ones which are laid on by that hand. He is the strong man ; it must be a stronger than he who can loose them ; this is beyond thy reach. Thou dost not feel God's bands, but walkest lightly under them. Thou entertainest and takest a pleasure in Satan's chains, in your company, sinful pleasures, and the like. This makes thy escape the more hopeless ; while thou rejoicest in thine iron fetters, as if they were chains of gold, it is an evidence that thou art beside thyself.—Finally, These bands will infallibly secure thy ruin, if thou be not loosed in time ; thou wilt die in the prison, if thou be not timeously brought out. There is but one step betwixt thee and death, eternal death. If thou die in the prison of an unconverted state, thou wilt go to the prison of hell, where the prisoners are kept without hope of any release.

This being the case, see to yourselves in time, O prisoners of hope ! Labour to be loosed from your bands, that you die not in the pit.—To such I would offer the following ADVICES.

1. Awake, and feel the weight of the bands on thee ; there is no hope of thy deliverance while thou walkest lightly under them. Mourn over your guilt, your unbelief, and long for deliverance.

2. Put your case in the hand of the great Cautioner, who is willing and able to relieve you.

Employ

Employ the Advocate, who will certainly carry the plea in your favour. He will not do as the butler who forgot Joseph, though employed to use his interest to bring him out of prison; but by the blood of his covenant Jesus will deliver you.

3. Give in your petition to your Judge: Job, ix. 15. "I would," says Job, "make my supplication to my Judge." Pray, pray, ye prayerless persons; pray every day, pray always, ye who pray only now and then; a sign that ye have to begin this exercise, to pray to purpose. Pray seriously, fervently, importunately, ye that are formal in prayer. Your life lies at stake; there is no time to trifle.

4. Hasten your trial, that your plea may be heard before a throne of grace; for if you miss that tribunal, it will come before another at death and judgement, when it will be impossible for you to stand. There are two tribunals for such prisoners,—the tribunal of mercy and grace, and the tribunal of justice.—There is, the tribunal of mercy and grace, to which the sinner is brought in the work of conversion, in time, in this world. Hither the elect prisoner is brought, and stands trembling, while other prisoners lie still in the prison, jovial and easy. Here he is accused, convicted, and condemned; he subscribes to the equity of the sentence; but, by the provision made in this court for criminals, he comes off acquitted from the sentence of death, to return to the prison no more.—There is the tribunal of justice, to which the sinner is brought at death and the last day. Here the prisoner, in his natural state, is sifted, accused, convicted, and condemned without remedy: Matth. xxii. 13. "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him (that wants the wedding-garment) hand and foot, and take him away,

away, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And from hence he is sent into the prison of hell. At the one or the other of these tribunals, all the prisoners must appear for their trial. To the first, I would have you to hasten your cause; for it has advantages which the other has not. In the first, the law is subservient to the gospel, and condemns, to make the sinner flee to the Mediator: Gal. iii. 24. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." In the second, the law condemns, to make the sinner's case absolutely hopeless. The one makes the sinner sick unto life and everlasting health, the other to death. At the one, a person may have the advantage of a Surety to undertake for his debt, of an Advocate to plead for him, 1 John, ii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." He never fails to bring his client's cause to a comfortable issue. But at the other, there is no Cautioner, no Advocate; the prisoner must act all for himself; yea, the Cautioner and Advocate is judge to condemn him.—Finally, at the one, there is a covert of blood for the condemned man to flee under, where the sentence of death cannot take effect. There are horns of an altar, from which justice cannot take him, and a city of refuge, where he shall be safe. But none of these are to be had at the other; therefore haste the trial.—We now proceed,

III. To consider the darkness and blindness of the prisoners is a natural state. Here it will be necessary to attend to three things. *First*, The nature of this blindness. *Secondly*, The kinds of it

it incident to these prisoners. And, *thirdly*, The effects of it upon them. — Let us attend,

First, To the nature of this blindness. And here we may observe, that it is a spiritual, and not a bodily defect. Though they have their eyes in their heads, their poor souls are full of darkness: Eph. v. 8. “Ye were sometimes darkness.” Though they may have a natural and literal knowledge of spiritual things, yet they want the spiritual and saving light of life: 1 Cor. ii. 14. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” How manifestly are these distinguished! Though they have the knowledge of the history of these things, yet they are strangers to the mystery of them. Thus it is said, Deut. xxix. 4. “Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” — Again, it is total blindness. They are not only dark, but darkness itself, Eph. v. 8. There is not the least gleam of saving light in their souls; they are absolute strangers to, and unacquainted with God in Christ. Their service in religion is to an unknown God. They know not Christ; there is a transcendent glory in him, but they cannot perceive it. They are strangers to themselves; they are wretched and miserable, but know it not, Rev. iii. 17. They see not their sins in their own ugly colours, in their natural deformity. — Let us,

Secondly, Attend to the kinds of blindness incident to these prisoners. There is—a natural blindness common to all of them. All Adam’s children are born blind: Rom. iii. 11. “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” Our minds naturally are void of saving light, we have lost saving knowledge, with other
parts

parts of God's image. Hence, whenever grace opens the eyes, people are as it were brought into a new world, seeing things they never saw before, and seeing them in that manner in which they never saw them before.—Again, There is an acquired blindness, which they procure to themselves: Eph. iv. 18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The power and prevalence of lusts blind them more and more to the true interest of their souls. The light shines about them, but they hate it; it glances in their faces from the word and providence, but they shut their eyes, and will not let it in: Isa. xxvi. 11. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." They by this means strengthen their diseases; and the longer they continue in it, there is the less hope.—Finally, There is a judicial blindness: Isa. vi. 9. 10. "And he said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." They rebel against the light, they abuse that light which they have, they will not open their eyes to clear light, and God judicially shuts them. He withdraws the common influence of his Spirit from them, and they are infatuated, so that they cannot see their own true interest, but act as fools and madmen in matters of the greatest importance. They are "delivered over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," Rom. i. 28. They are also delivered to Satan, who, as the executioner of justice, binds them more and more: 2 Cor. iv. 4. "He blinds the minds of them that believe not."—We are to attend,

Thirdly, To the effects of this blindness on the prisoners.

prisoners. These are many: I mention the following.—There is,

1. A situation truly uncomfortable and piteous. They are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, Matth. iv. 16. What a melancholy case were the Egyptians in during the three days darkness, while the Israelites had light in all their dwellings! It was among the last and worst of their plagues. Surely light is sweet; and the more excellent the light is, it must be the sadder to be deprived of it. The light of God's grace and favour is the most excellent light, and therefore heaven is called light, and hell is darkness, utter darkness; no gleam of comfort in hell. A natural state is the suburbs of hell, and no real comfort in this condition, but a possibility of help. Therefore the saints pity them, as in a most piteous condition. Jerusalem's case drew tears from our Saviour's eyes, Luke, xix. 41. 42.—There is,

2. Unacquaintedness with their own state of sinfulness and misery, Rev. iii. 17.—Their misery; they are blind, they see not the hazard they are in of dropping every moment into the pit. The messengers of death are approaching them, the sword of justice is hanging over their heads, signs of approaching ruin are on them and about them; others see it, but not themselves: Hos. vii. 9. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The prodigal never saw his starving condition, till he came to himself, Luke, xv. 17.—Their sinfulness also; of this they are ignorant; Rom. vii. 9. "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." As in a house, the motes flying thick there are not perceived till the sun-beams enlighten it; so, till the

the Lord open the eyes of the blinded sinner, he sees not those swarms of living lusts which are preying on his dead soul, the innumerable evils which compass him about, those multiplied pieces of guilt which are binding him over to destruction.

3. They are easily ensnared and deceived in matters of the greatest concern. Our Lord Jesus pronounces a woe to the world because of offences, Matth. xviii. 7. because stumbling-blocks laid before the blind cannot but have most pernicious effects. The world is full of snares laid by Satan and his instruments; and the blindness of the mind exposes men to the utmost hazard by them. How easily are they cheated out of their greatest interests for another world, and made to hug a shadow instead of the substance, and embrace a scorpion instead of a fish, and stones instead of bread; because, though they be eagle-eyed in the things of time, they are like bats and owls as to the light of life. Like Esau, for one morsel of meat they sell this birth-right, Heb. xii. 16.

4. They get no good of the light of the gospel, but stumble at noon-day, as in the dark. They receive this grace in vain. The night and day are alike to the blind, winter and spring to the dead tree. And hence men live under the gospel as loosely, profanely, and carelessly, as if they were living in the dark corners of the earth. The light of the gospel, like a shining sun, has arisen, teaching us, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus, ii. 12. But instead of going like men to their proper work, they like wild beasts go to their dens, and lie at ease, neither working out their own salvation, nor doing any good to others. The light is set up to

them, but their works are works of darkness, and so they hate the light.

5. They are precipitating themselves into the utmost hazard to their souls, without fear: Psal. xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked faith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." How fearlessly do men venture themselves into the forbidden ground, rush in the way of sin on the sword-point of justice: Jerem. viii. 6. "I hearkened, and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." They drink up iniquity as the ox the water, being in that case as blind men drinking up a cup of poison, which they know not to be such. —There is,

6. Deep security in the most dangerous condition, as not seeing what is before them. They go on in their courses, as the sinners did before the flood, Matth. xxiv. 38. They are exposed every day to the utmost hazard, yet they are secure. They stand before God's bent bow, as a mark to his arrows, yet they are at ease. Wrath is pursuing them, yet they are not concerned to flee from the wrath to come. They are jovial while about the pit's mouth, and even though they are in hazard every moment of falling into it.

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, this blindness fills the whole man in heart and life with darkness and confusion: Matth. vi. 23. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness; if, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" A person can do nothing which is good in this case, he lies open to all evil both of sin and misery. And this darkness, unremoved, will make way for eternal darkness.

Having,

Having, as we proceeded, made some practical improvement, in conclusion, we shall only exhort you,

1. To be convinced of this your natural darkness; believe it from the Lord's word, and believe your hazard from it, though otherwise ye do not see it.

2. See your need of Christ to open your eyes. Pray for the Spirit; say, with the blind man, "Lord, that mine eyes may be opened."

Lastly, From what has been said on the several parts of Christ's commission with respect to natural men, unconverted sinners may get a broad view of their misery. Ye are Satan's captives, yea, prisoners, God's prisoners, the devil's prisoners, prisoners in bands, and blinded prisoners. Be deeply affected with your condition, and be persuaded, as prisoners of hope, to turn to your strong-holds, while you have access to them. — While it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, but hearken to his voice, proclaiming that he is "anointed to open the prison to them that are bound."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LV.

ISA. lxi. 1.—*And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*

HAVING attended to the first doctrinal point on this subject, we now go on to

DOCT. II. That, by open proclamation in the gospel, Jesus offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, a loosing of their bands, and a bringing them out of their prisons.

WE shall illustrate the different parts of this doctrine, under the following heads.

I. We shall shew, that Christ offers to such an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and to bring them from darkness unto light.

II. We shall shew how Christ takes off the devil's bands from these prisoners.

III. We

III. We shall shew, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and a bringing them out of these.

The improvement of each will be added as we proceed.—We are then,

I. To shew, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and so to bring them from darkness unto light.

What, do such say, is in this offer? Certain it is that saving illumination is hereby offered to you: Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee," says he, "to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." This is a glorious and most necessary benefit, a thousand times more necessary than light to those who are naturally blind. The unrenewed world lie in darkness, they will not, they cannot see. There is a long and dark night upon them. Christ offers to bring a morning unto their souls, to make the day-star arise there; yea, the Sun of righteousness to shine there. There is a thick mist about you, so that you cannot see your way, but spend your life in endless wanderings among deep pits. He will, by the spirit of his mouth, dispel it, and make light to arise up, that ye may see clearly about you. Your eyes are clouded and blinded: he will make the scales to fall off from them; and this will give you a threefold sight.—There is,

1. A sad and melancholy sight, the saddest ever you saw, which will make the lightest heart among us all heavy; and this is a sight of yourselves in your universal sinfulness and defilement. This pricked Paul's hearers to the heart, Acts, ii. 37. It struck Paul with the paleness of death; for "I was alive," said he, "without the law once: but when

the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9. Men naturally are strangers to themselves, but when the prisoner's eyes are opened, he gets a broad view of his sinful self.—He sees a corrupt nature, from which no good can come; averse to good, and prone to evil; not to be changed, but by a miracle of grace: Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees a corrupt, desperately wicked heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. There is an emptiness of all good; a fulness of all evil, the seed and root of all abominations which are done in the world, living lusts of all kinds, like so many vermin in their nest, Mark, vii. 21.; a continual steam of actual sinning and lusting, arising from hence on the steam of a dunghill.—Further, he sees a sinful life and conversation, woven into one continued piece of sin, where the parts sometime thought good will appear even black as hell, like the rest; unclean lips, all over defiled with vanity or vileness; an unclean life, which is unfruitful and unprofitable for God and for themselves; full of sins against the holy law of God, committed against much light and love, as well as checks by word and providence, &c. When the Lord comes to the prisoner, and opens his eyes, he takes him and leads him through his heart and life; then what a sad sight does he get! then will he cry, as in Job, xl. 4. "Behold, I am vile: What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Then is accomplished these words "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God,

God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts," Jer. ii. 19.—There is,

2. A terrible and frightful sight, which will make the stoutest heart to tremble, so that they shall say, as Moses did at the burning mount, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And this sight is threefold.—There is a sight of an absolute God, in the glory of his holiness and justice, Lev. x. 3. Men's eyes are naturally withheld, so that they see not what a God they have to do with, Psal. l. 21. They think he is altogether such an one as themselves; but says he, "I will reprove thee, and set them (your sins) in order before you." When their eyes are opened, they are cured of their fatal mistake: Habbak. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." They see him on a throne of justice, angry with the wicked every day; a hater of every sin, a severe avenger of sin from the least to the greatest, with whom no sin is accounted a small thing. There is a fiery stream issuing out of his mouth, to devour his adversaries, as engaged, by his word and nature, to magnify the law and make it honourable. This terrible sight will give the sinner experience of the psalmist's case, Psal. lxxiii. 3. "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;" and hence make his heart cry out within him, as in Isa. xxxiii. 14. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—Again, he gets a sight of the fiery law in its absolute purity, extensiveness, and severity: Rom. vii. 9. "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law, to the blinded sinner, is like a looking-glass covered over with dust, in
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which the man never sees the true shadow of himself. But when the sinner's eyes are opened, the glass is rubbed clean, and shines bright, to his terror and astonishment. Then it discovers the damnable nature of some things he thought good, the heinousness of what he reckoned small faults, and makes all his sins greater than ever he thought them. He sees the threats and curses of the law, no more as scarecrows, or as the shadows of the mountains, but more sure than heaven or earth to have their effect. And then one word of it will go deeper with him, than a thousand used to do.—Further, he gets a sight of himself, in his miserable, lost, and undone estate. Like the prodigal, he comes to himself, and sees that he is perishing with hunger. He sees himself to be ruined, to be a self-destroyer; a dead man in law, devoted to destruction by the curse of the law; under sentence of eternal death, pronounced by the Judge of all, and registered in the Bible; bound with the threatenings of the law. as so many cords of death; and withal, utterly unable to extricate himself out of this gulph of sin and misery: Rom. v. 6. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

3. They get a comforting and heart-reviving sight, the most comfortable they ever saw, which will make the most heavy heart joyful. And this is a sight of Christ in the glory of his Mediatorial office: Isa. xxxiii. 17. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off." They see Jesus standing—as a Prophet, discovering those thoughts of love, which were from eternity in the breast of Christ's Father, toward these prisoners.—Standing as a Priest as he had been slain, at the Father's right hand, making

making intercession for the prisoner's freedom.— And as a King, having the sovereign command of life and death, and having the keys of the prison in his hand, to take out the prisoner when he will. O glorious fight for the prisoners! when their eyes are opened. It is a threefold fight.—It is a fight of the transcendant excellency and loveliness of Jesus, Isa. xxxiii. 17. (quoted above.) While the prisoner lay in darkness, he was ready to say to every lover of Christ, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9. There was then to him more glory in a vain world, in the lust of the eye and the pride of life, than in Christ. But now that his eyes are opened, he sees a glory in him, which darkens all created excellency, as the rising sun makes the stars to hide their heads. He appears now as the pearl of great price, Matth. xiii. 46. All the perfections of the divine glory shine forth in him; these appear in the face of Christ, as in a glass, of which the prisoner now gets a view. And then none but Christ for him: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."—Again, he gets a sight of his fulness for, and suitableness to the case of the prisoner. Like the prodigal, Luke, xv. 17. he sees that in his father's house there is bread enough and to spare. He sees then that he needs look to no other quarter for help; that there is an all-sufficient fulness of it in Christ. Does the prisoner consider his vast debts? Christ is a cautioner, a mighty one. Does he consider his crimes? Christ died to satisfy for them. He has power over the jailor, and can bind the strong man, loose and bring out the prisoner. Is he defiled in his prison-garments? Christ has white raiment to put on him, in exchange for these. Are there iron gates in the way?

way? yea, irons on the prisoner's legs? He breaks the bars of iron, and brings out the prisoner.—Once more, he gets a sight of the willingness and readiness of Christ to communicate of his fulness: Heb. iv. 15. 16. "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He now sees the truth and reality of gospel-invitations and promises, that they are not only fair words, as he sometime thought them, but sure and tried words: Psal. xii. 6. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." This revives the fainting heart, is the great cordial for a soul ready to perish; so that the prisoner resolves to venture himself, and lay his whole weight on the glorious Deliverer.

Before leaving this head, it may be of importance to inquire, what ground the blinded prisoner has to rest upon and embrace this offer in the proclamation of the gospel?—As to this we observe,

1. That there is nothing offered but what our Lord can perform and make good: Numb. xxiii. 19. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall not he do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Jesus is the true light, the light of the world; the star that came out of Jacob, Num. xxiv. 17.; the bright and morning star, which puts an end to the dark night in the soul, Rev. xxii. 16.; the sun of righteousness, Mal. iv. 2. He has a fulness of the spirit of light

in

in him, to communicate to dark souls, Rev. iii. 1.

—We observe,

2. That there is nothing offered but what he has already performed in the experience of thousands, who have been Satan's close prisoners as well as you : Isa. xxxv. 4. 5. 6. "He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped : Then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing : for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Paul was a blind Pharisee, but O how wonderfully were his eyes opened ! There have been many who were as stupid, secure, and blind as any, whom the day-spring from on high hath visited ; who sat in darkness, but are now turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.—We observe,

3. That there is nothing proposed to us but what he has his Father's commission to offer and make good : Isa. xlix. 6. "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." Ver. 9. "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth ; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in their ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." Again, to the same purport, see Isa. xlii. 6. 7. And therefore his coming into the world is compared to the day-spring, Luke, i. 78. which comes at its appointed time.—We observe,

4. That what is offered is offered to you. Ye are all comprehended in the proclamation : Isa. lv. 1. "Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

waters." Whatever be your case, though you be in the innermost room of Satan's prison in the world, ye are men, ye are sons of men: Prov. viii.

4. "Unto you, O men! do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And the offer is very particular, Eph. v. 14. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—We observe,

5. That there is the greatest reality, truth, and sincerity in the offer: Rev. iii. 14. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Never one embraced this offer who was refused. It grieves his Spirit that sinners do not fall in with it. He wept over Jerusalem for this; and he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven.

This part of the subject we would improve, by urging you to embrace the offered light, the saving illumination proclaimed in the gospel; and to come to Christ with this errand, That your eyes may be opened. And here I would exhort you to the following things.

Be convinced of your natural darkness and blindness in the things of God. Say not, with the Pharisees, Are we blind also? The less thou seest of this darkness about thee, the greater is the darkness upon thee. The best see but in part, and most men see none at all in a saving manner.—Love not darkness: John, iii. 19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." As the owl loves not the shining sun, so men wedded to their lusts hate the light, and loves to be in darkness. They do not know God, nor his law, nor his Son, nor themselves, and they care not for the knowledge of them: Job, xxi. 14. "Therefore they say unto God,

God, Depart from us : for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They are at little pains with their Bibles, and far less with their hearts and lives, to make them agreeable to the light of the word. Do not resist and rebel against the light, Job, xxiv. 13. " They are of those who rebel against the light; they know not the way thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Let not your lusts carry you over the belly of what light you have, lest ye be judicially blinded. What light God offers you by his word, by providences, or by inward motions and convictions within your breasts, beware of fighting against it, beware of resisting and putting it out. Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord begins to throw in beams of light into the soul, at a sermon, under a rod, or some rebuke of providence. But the sinner cannot be easy till this be again darkened.—Be satisfied with no light, which has not a sanctifying and purifying heat with it. The true light is called the light of life, John, viii. 12. When the Spirit of the Lord fell on the disciples, Acts, ii. there appeared tongues of fire, enlightening and warming. Dangerous is the case of men who keep truth a prisoner : Rom. i. 18. " For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."—*Lastly*, Go to the Lord for the Spirit of illumination. Pray, search for the same as for hid treasures, and believe for it in the Lord Jesus. Look to him that ye may be enlightened with this saving illumination of his word and Spirit.—To prevail with you in all these points, I would mention the following *MOTIVES*.

Mot. 1. This illumination is absolutely necessary for salvation. A sinner will never prize Christ, nor come to him, till his eyes are opened to see his

fin and misery, what a just God and a strict law he has to deal with, what a precious and suitable Saviour Christ is : John, iv. 10. " Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." While Satan keeps his prisoner bound, he will hold him fast. That which the eye sees not, the heart receives not. The danger may be very great, but when unknown the sinner is secure.

Mot. 2. Blindness under the gospel is most inexcusable : John, ix. 41. " Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see : therefore your sin remaineth." It is wilful blindness. Those who live in the dark corners of the earth, where the light of the gospel is not known, what wonder is it that they walk on in darkness? But the light of the gospel shines about us. Christ offers to enlighten us by his Spirit, Eph. v. 14. If we chuse darkness rather than light, we must lay our account with our choice being our ruin, John, iii. 19.

Mot. 3. Saving illumination is the only way to true comfort, and the want of it the way to utter misery : Col. i. 12. 13. " Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." At the blinding of the soul, Satan completes the security of the prisoner ; and at the enlightening of him, Christ begins his deliverance. In them who are saved, the light is carried on to the light of glory. In them who are lost, the darkness is continued, till they come to endless and utter darkness.—We are now,

II. To

II. To shew, that Christ offers to the prisoners a loosing of those bands wherewith they are bound.

Here it will be necessary to shew,—1. How he looses God's bands from off the prisoners.—And, 2 How he takes off the devil's bands from them. Let us then,

1. Shew how he looses God's bands from off the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is God's prisoner under the bands of guilt, and of the curse of the law, which bind him over to destruction. These he looses and takes off the sinner by the application of his own blood: Zech. ix. 11. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Here we observe,

(1.) That Jesus purchased their freedom from these bands by his death and sufferings. Guilt is a strong tie, the curse is a heavy chain on the prisoner; in these the power of spiritual death lay. But Jesus, by his death, procured the sinner's relaxation: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." His compassion for the prisoners made him pay for them a ransom of his own blood. He took their bands of guilt and the curse upon himself, that he might loose them from off them. Now he has ransomed the prisoners, who will accept of his delivery, and has a right to loose them from their bands; justice and the law having nothing to object.—We observe,

(2.) That Jesus comes in the gospel to the prison-door, proclaims and makes offer of liberty to the prisoners. This he does in the text. In his name the offer is made by his messengers; his authority to loose the prisoners is asserted, Matth.

xxviii. 18. "Jesus came and said unto them, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' His ability and willingness to do it is confirmed, Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." They are pressed to consent to the offer; charged upon their peril to comply with it; and all this to make them willing to come away out of the prison with the deliverer.—We observe,

(3.) That though the most part give a deaf ear to the gospel-call, will not believe their danger, but sit at ease in their fetters, yet some are made a willing people in a day of power, Ps. cx. 3. By the word, faith is wrought in their hearts, Rom. x. 17.; even that faith whereby the soul lays hold upon, and unites with Christ, flees in under the covert of his blood, lays over the weight of all its guilt upon Jesus, believing his blood to be sufficient to take it all away, and, renouncing all other pleas, betakes itself to this: Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Thus this blood is applied.—We observe,

(4.) That when this blood is thus applied, the chains are ordered to be taken off the prisoner: Job, xxxiii. 24. "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Yea, the chains fall off of course, since, as in Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The Cautioner's payment is pled for the debtor, and he is discharged; the criminal's cause is carried by the Surety and Advocate, and he is absolved. He is under the covert of blood, therefore neither law nor justice

justice can reach him. He is brought into the bond of the covenant of grace, and so the guilt of eternal wrath, which is the bond of the first covenant, can hold him no longer; guilt and the curse being removed, judicial hardness has no place.

2. Let us shew how Christ looses and takes off the devil's bands from the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is also the devil's prisoner; he likewise lays bands on the sinner. These are in themselves sinful lusts and practices, &c. by which he holds them as by bands. Christ looses from these by the powerful workings of his Spirit, giving them grace, which breaks their bands asunder.—He gives them,

(1.) Awakening grace, which rouses them up, and bursts the bands of sloth, wherewith they were held, Eph. v. 14. (quoted above), and cures them of the fatal delusion which they were under as to their state. Like the prodigal, they come to themselves, Luke, xv. 17. The sinner sleeps securely in his sins and in his chains; but the Spirit of God gives him a sound awakening, so that his rest in sin is disturbed, and he can no longer get lived at ease in his former courses. His conscience sets upon him, and sounds a terrible alarm of wrath in his ears, which ceaseth not till he has fled to Christ for refuge, and he flees without delay.—Jesus gives them,

(2.) Enlightening grace, Eph. v. 14. by which the sinner gets a discovery of himself, and a discovery of God and Christ. He is brought, as it were, into a new world, in which every thing appears in other colours than it did before. The mask which Satan put upon the ways of God and the ways of sin, is pulled off, and he sees the beauty, the excellence of religion. Thus the band of preju-

dice is broken, the evil and danger of the ways of sin are exposed to them, so that the sinful company he before delighted in becomes a terror to him, and he says, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping," Psal. vi. 8. He sees the vanity and emptiness of all time's things, so that Satan can hold him no longer by this pitiful handle.—Jesus gives them,

(3.) Quickening and regenerating grace, by which they receive a new principle of spiritual life: 2 Pet. i. 4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." So that the bands of death in which they were held give way, and they become new creatures: 2 Cor. v. 17. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." They are endowed with a new nature, having new motions and inclinations heavenward; so that the band of earthly-mindedness is broken; their will is renewed; Christ becomes their choice above all, and they lay hold upon him with heart and good will, so as that the bands of unbelief give way; their hearts are softened; they get the heart of stone removed, and a heart of flesh given unto them; their affections are changed, so that they now love the things which they before hated, and now hate those lusts and sinful courses which they formerly loved. Jesus gives them,

(4.) Sanctifying grace, by which the power of sin is more and more weakened in them, and the divers lusts with which they were held are mortified, so that lusts cannot command them as they were

were wont to do. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. The new principle stirs in them to the practice of holiness in all manner of life and conversation. Thus Christ, entering into the soul, strikes off the devil's bands, and sets the sinner at liberty.

As an improvement of this part of our subject, it may just be observed,

That this lets us see that none are so fast bound under guilt, or the power of sin and Satan, but they may be loosed. And therefore we have ground of hope in the most hopeless case. A sight of guilt is ready to make the awakened sinner despond; but the blood of Christ is sufficient to remove it, whatever it be: "This blood cleanseth from all sin," 1 John, i. 7. Though the cords of guilt be manifold, which cannot be loosed from off the conscience by floods of tears, the most bitter mournings; yea, though above the power of men and angels; yet the blood of Christ is of infinite value and efficacy: Isa. i. 18. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—In like manner as to the power of sin. The awakened sinner will see that it is as easy for the leopard to change his spots, and the Ethiopian his colour, as for him to change his heart, or free himself from the power of sin. He will see that it is hard to get out from under the power of Satan and his own lusts. But remember, Christ is the stronger man, he can bind Satan and spoil him of his goods. There is nothing too hard for him to do. Grace is powerful, and will always be victorious where it once begins: it converted Paul from a persecutor into a preacher; Manasseh,

Manasseh, who was like a lion, was changed into a lamb. Therefore look to him that ye may be loosed.

WE proceed now, with the

III. General head, to shew that Christ offers to the prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and to bring them out.

Here I shall shew what is in this offer, 1. More generally; and then, 2. More particularly.

1. More generally, it is the bringing the sinner into a state of grace. There are two things in it. The Lord Jesus opening the sinner's prison brings him,

(1.) Out of the state of condemnation, in which he lay from his birth till that happy hour: Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The sentence of the law condemning him to eternal death is annulled, is taken off, and can affect him no more. He is made a free man, delivered from the curse by him who was made a curse. He is brought out from under the law as a covenant of works: Rom. vi. 14. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Though it continues to be a rule to him, yet he is neither left to seek life by his obedience to it, nor can he any more be doomed by it to eternal death for his disobedience; the law being dead to him, and he to it, in this respect.—Jesus brings him,

(2.) Out of that state of sin in which he lay all his days before, incapable of doing any thing truly good, capable of nothing but sinning. But now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. The prisoner in his natural state, with the rest of the world, lieth in wickedness, 1. John,

John, v. 19. ; like a dead man in his grave, rotting and consuming. Christ quickens the sinners, opens their graves, and brings them out from under the reigning power of sin. In the day of conversion, Christ comes to the prison-door as to the grave of Lazarus, and says, as he did to him, Come forth. So the dead man lives, the prisoner comes out of the dungeon, out of a state of sin into a state of grace.

2. Let us consider what is in this offer more particularly. There are several great benefits which it proposes to us ; such as,

(1.) The prisoner's debts are discharged, even to the last farthing : Col. ii. 13. " And you being dead in your sins, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." They were God's prisoners, and could never come out without payment of that debt for which they were imprisoned. But the Deliverer takes all the debt on himself; he says to his Father, as in Philem. 18. " If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." And so it is accounted as if they had paid it.

(2.) The prisoner's crimes are forgiven, which otherwise would have taken away his life : Isa. xxxiii. 24. " And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The prisoner's pardon is written in the blood of his Redeemer, " This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Heb. viii. 12. " For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The King's seal is appended to it, so that neither law nor justice can quarrel it : Eph. i. 13. " In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with

with that holy Spirit of promise." This is the white stone given to him that overcometh, of which none knows the sweetness but those who have it.

(3.) The prisoner is delivered from the power of Satan, Acts. xxvi. 18. "They are turned from the power of Satan unto God." The jailor has no more power to keep the prisoner, nay, nor ever to bring him back; because he is not delivered by fraud, but in a legal way, by the sovereign authority of the King's Son, who has all power in heaven and earth. The demands which law and justice had on the prisoner have all been satisfied by the Deliverer, therefore he can be no longer held.—As to the prisoner,

(4.) His prison-garments are taken away, and he is clothed with change of raiment. The rags of his own righteousness are thrown away, and he is clothed with the fair white raiment of Christ's righteousness put on by the hand of faith, "I counsel thee," says Jesus, as in Rev. iii. 18. "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." The old man with his deeds is put off, the body of sin is destroyed, and the new man is put on. The prisoner stands before his deliverer, like Joshua before the angel: Zech. iii. 3. 4. "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel; and he answered and spake to them that stood before him, Take away the filthy garments from him; and unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

(5.) The prisoner is brought forth into the light of God's countenance, Isa. xlix. 9. "That thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that

that are in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." God is in Christ reconciled to him. He is no more his enemy, but the sinner's friend, his confederate in the covenant of peace. The peace is made up through the great Peace-maker, Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though the world henceforth may hate him, and become his enemy, he has friendship with heaven, which may support him under all their hatred.

(6.) The prisoner is restored to all his forfeited privileges: Eph. ii. 17. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As Joseph, being a slave, was brought out of the dungeon to Pharaoh's court, and made the ruler over Egypt; so in that day in which the soul is brought to the state of grace, he is freed from his slavery, brought out of prison, and advanced in the court of heaven. Like the poor and wise child out of prison, he comes to reign, as in Eccles. iv. 13. 14. for they are all made kings who are delivered by Christ. We shall shut up this subject with a practical improvement of the whole.—And this,

1. In an use of instruction.

This subject affords some lessons to us all; as,

(1.) To be living in a state of sin is the most miserable life in the world, the most miserable life out of hell. Why are all those similitudes used, of a captivity, an imprisonment, and this of the worst kind, but because no captivity, no imprisonment is sufficient to express the misery of this captivity? Therefore these similitudes are multiplied, that what is wanting in one may be made up by another. And whenever the sinner's eyes
are

are opened to see his misery, he will see that the worst case of captives and prisoners on earth comes infinitely short of the miserable state he is in, so soon as eternity succeeds time. For,

[1.] Of all persons in the world, an unconverted person has the least ground to be joyful: John, iii. 36. "And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Some think they are young and in their bloom, and therefore they may be allowed a pleasant jovial life. Some think like him who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Every one who is not held down with worldly cares or crosses, is ready to take his ease, though a stranger to Christ and a state of grace. But I would say to thee as Jehu did to Joram, 2 Kings, ix. 18. "What hast thou to do with peace?" Let them live joyfully whose prison-doors have been opened; they are set free, to whom God is a friend, and who are beyond the hazard of eternal condemnation. But what reason have you to live joyfully, who are captives, prisoners, condemned criminals, and know not but this day you may be led out to the execution? If there were a drawn sword hanging over your heads wherever you went, would it not mar your mirth and jollity? The sword of God's justice is thus suspended over all those who are out of Christ.

[2.] It would be impossible for one to live at ease in an unconverted state, if they were not blind to their own hazard and misery: Luke, xix. 41.—43. Ye may as well bid a malefactor be easy under the sentence of death and the sight of the gibbet, or a man hanging over a deep gulf by a slender twig, as to bid an awakened sinner be easy in his case, before he get out of it. But
many

many are posting to destruction down the hill, and yet are very easy, because they see not the frightful case they are in. And why do they not see it, but because they shut their eyes? It is told them, but they will not believe it; so after all they are as easy as if they had been hearing an idle tale.— We are instructed,

(2.) That the delivery of a sinner out of the state of nature into a state of grace, from under the guilt and reigning power of sin, is no easy business, but business of the greatest weight and difficulty, which ever the world was witness to. Consider the ransom which had to be paid for the captives and prisoners; the greatest ransom ever given by men is not once to be named with it. Silver and gold, crowns and kingdoms, would not do here, but blood, even the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18. 19.; angels nor men could not furnish it. Consider the power by which the deliverance is to be effected, no less than an infinite power can do it. What is the storming of towns, the breaking down of iron gates, and the recovering the prey from a lion, to the recovering a sinner from the power of the devil? No less than an omnipotent power can do this, Isa. xlix. 24. 25. For,

[1.] What way can men think ever to be delivered in that careless thoughtless way with which most part satisfy themselves? Luke, xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Will drowsy wishes and sluggish desires, unaccompanied with suitable endeavours, do it? Will the leading of a careless life, and then begging mercy from God when they come to die, be sufficient? Will these things serve instead of the work of grace, to pluck the prey out of Satan's

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mouth, to knock the devil's chains off the prisoners, and set them free? By no means.

[2.] With what face can sinners delay the work of conversion to God? Is it not work hard enough to get out of Satan's grips, begin as soon as we will? Will men venture to stay till he has loaded them with heavier chains, till stronger fetters of guilt be wreathed about their necks? Up, and be doing, lose no time, you will find the work already hard enough. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.—We are instructed,

(3.) That there is no deliverance out of the state of sin and wrath but through Jesus Christ, Acts, iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Had there been another name, another person, Jesus had not been employed in this work. There was none but he who could do it; and we may add, that the worst of sinners may be delivered in and by him. There is no guilt above the efficacy of his blood, no power of sin above the efficacy of his Spirit. At the same time, without him the most blameless person who lives will be ruined for ever: John, xiv. 6. "I am the way," said Jesus, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Death will prey upon them in time, though insensibly, and devour them for ever, to their everlasting misery.—This subject instructs us,

Lastly, That none are delivered by Christ, but those who are made willing to come out of their sins away with the Deliverer, and who, with the most solemn seriousness, embrace the covenant. He does not say that he will break open the prison-doors, and bring away the prisoners, sleeping or waking, willing or unwilling, careless to be away, or careful. No; he deals with them in a rational way,

way, proclaims the liberty ; if they accept of it as he offers it, well and good ; if they will not have it but on terms of their own making, they must remain in prison, and perish : John, v. 40. " And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."—Then,

(1.) If any be careless as to their getting out of this state, Satan is in no danger of losing them. Though the liberty be proclaimed, they trouble not themselves about the matter, further than to hear it. Satan keeps his prisoners, and Christ will never bring them away who are not made desirous to come. Having the offer of liberty, Jesus will leave the soul still in bonds, if there be not a compliance with it.

(2.) It concerns all who would be saved, deliberately to consider the gospel-offer and their own case, and make the most solemn, serious work of closing with Christ, of entering into the covenant, and transacting with the Deliverer, as upon a matter of the utmost importance. Here eternity lies at stake ; if they manage it to purpose, they are happy for ever ; if they mismanage it, they are undone. If the prisoner manages his business right with this Deliverer, he will be got out of prison ; if he altogether miss this opportunity, he must lie still there for ever.

This subject instructs particularly those who are under bands of which they would fain be rid, what course they are to take.

1. Those who have sometimes walked at liberty, having had their souls brought out of prison by the Redeemer's blood and Spirit ; but seem to themselves now to be carried back into Satan's prison again, and feel his chains heavy upon them. The Lord sometimes suffers his own people to fall into this case, because of their careless walking,

their grieving and vexing his Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit is quenched, corruption is strengthened, and Satan gets advantage: Isa. lvii. 17. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." What should they do in this case, but own the justice of the stroke, apply themselves to the Deliverer, who alone can loose spiritual bonds? This is the design of the dispensation: Hof. v. 15. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Make new application of this blood by faith, and breathe after the communications of his Holy Spirit: Isa. lvii. 18. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and his mourners." He delivered them out of a miserable state, and will also deliver them out of their present uncomfortable condition.

2. Those who feel the bands of guilt strong upon their souls, and are ready to despond under them as bands which can never be loosed. Such should consider, that there is no exception of bands from which Christ is sent to loose; be they weak, be they strong bands, with which the sinner is bound, Christ proclaims liberty from them; and it is an intolerable affront to the Mediator's dignity, to entertain a thought of bands from which the infinite merit of his blood, and the all-powerful efficacy of his Spirit, cannot loose. The dead corpse cast into the prophet's grave was restored to life; and shall not the soul bound with the strongest fetters of death, be set free so soon as quickening virtue comes from a crucified Christ. Such, then, should labour to believe, that they may thus see the glory of God.

3. Those

3. Those who feel the bands of raging and unruly lusts so strengthened by Satan and their own corruptions, that they are ready to think that there is no breaking of them. Such should consider, that our Lord often singles out those in the most hopeless condition, to make them monuments of his rich grace. Such was the case of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. 11. In the text, those who are blinded in the prison have opening proclaimed to them. Though the heart may be agitated like a raging sea with temptations and corruptions, it will cost Jesus but a word to still them all in a moment: Isa. lvii. 19. "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, faith the Lord, and I will heal him." The strongest lusts shall yield to the power of his grace, and the strong man flee at the rebuke of the stronger.—We shall only add,

Secondly, An use of exhortation.

You who are delivered, and have been made partakers of the liberty proclaimed in the gospel, we exhort you to walk suitably to the great deliverance. If you be thus distinguished,—you will prize the Deliverer above all: 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious." You will say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee." And the more you look back on the hazard to which you were exposed, you will love him the more.—You will prize the deliverance above all which you ever met with, or can meet with in this world: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." Look on this time as the time of loves.—You will long for the perfecting of this deliverance, and be endeavouring to get it advanced and carried on, till you be

completely freed from indwelling sin : Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"—If thus distinguished, it is your duty to walk humbly and thankfully, to the praise of your Deliverer ; to carry yourselves as children of light, in a holy and heavenly conversation, and to have no fellowship with the works of darkness. In short, it is your duty to be concerned for those who are still prisoners, to pity them, to pray for them, and help forward their deliverance.

As to you who are yet Satan's captives and prisoners, hasten to be loosed ; while the proclamation of liberty sounds in your ears, accept of deliverance. Consider that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Now liberty is in your offer, but it will not always be so ; the day comes for transporting the prisoners into another prison, where there are no offers nor possibility of escape ; and how soon this may be, you know not. — Refuse the liberty to-day, delay it but till to-morrow, and ye may be beyond hope. But now the captives may be loosed, the prisoners enlarged, and thus be blessed with an eternal freedom. Kifs, therefore, the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way ; when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him *.

* This subject was finished in the end of February 1715.

DEPARTING FROM INIQUITY THE DUTY OF
ALL WHO NAME THE NAME OF JESUS*.

S E R M O N LVI.

2 TIM. ii. 19. *And let every one that nameth the
name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

A SOLEMN occasion of renewing our covenant with God being before us, it is necessary that we count the cost ere we begin to build. A Christian profession is easy, a Christian practice not so. It is melancholy to see how many in their practice do yoke together the name of Christ and the working of iniquity, as if they had found out that secret of conjoining light and darkness, Christ and Belial, which is hid from all saints. Our text confounds this mystery of iniquity, shewing that men must either part with Christ, or depart from iniquity: *And*, says the apostle, *let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

In this verse, the apostle obviates that scandal, and that shaking discouragement, which arose to the

* This and the following discourses on this text were delivered in May and June 1719.

the saints from the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philletus, mentioned in ver. 17. Satan would stand on the ruins of these men, and affright the saints with this temptation, Behold ! what loose ground you stand upon ! these who are now ship-wrecked stood once as fair for the harbour as you. To drive the bottom out of this temptation, the apostle tells them, that for all this, the foundation of the perseverance of real saints stands firm, as in ver. 19. " Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." As if he had said, The devil has got but his own, he has got none of Christ's. They were among Christ's sheep indeed ; they were, however, nothing but the devil's goats, of whom he ever had a sure hold by some iniquity or other, one lust or other ; and now by this bond of iniquity he has drawn them out from among the sheep of Christ : 1 John, ii. 19. " They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us : but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." But the foundation upon which every real saint is built is sure, and can never be overturned. This is the decree of election : (1.) A foundation of God's own laying ; (2.) A sealed foundation of God's own sealing ; and therefore affording the most ample security. A seal is for confirming and ratifying a decree and purpose ; the decree of election, including the perseverance of the saints, as the means to the end, is sealed for this end, and that with a twofold seal : " Having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his," and, " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

First, It is sealed with God's knowledge, " The Lord

Lord knoweth them that are his." Amongst the mixed multitude in the church, the Lord knows his own. —He knows those whom he has chosen, he cannot mistake them, though men may, and sometimes do, take others for them. He knows them practically, that is, he knows them, to distinguish them from others, he will take care of them that they be not lost, as one does with what he knows to be his own; and this secures them.

Secondly, It is sealed with effectual sanctification: Eph. iv. 30. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." He sees to the sanctification of his own, causing them to depart from iniquity, which is the only thing which can ruin them; and thus again they are secured.

For understanding of this, consider, that the apostle here has an eye to the history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numb. xvi. these Old-Testament apostates who perished in their sin. There was a dispute betwixt them and Moses and Aaron for the priesthood; the congregation at length thought the former as much the Lord's as the latter, ver. 19.; though at first it seems they knew not in whose favour to decide. Moses refers it to God's judgement, ver. 5. "The Lord will shew (Heb. make known) who are his, and who are holy;" importing, that the Lord knew who were his. This was the security of Moses and Aaron when the stroke came. When the earth was to swallow up Korah and his company, as in a spiritual sense it does all apostates, the congregation was, by God's appointment, charged to depart from the tents of these wicked men, and to touch nothing that was theirs, ver. 26. This charge was effectual to the congregation, but not
to

to these men's wives and their children, ver. 27.; so the latter perished, and the former were secured. It seems this was a typical event, an emblem of the sure standing of the saints, while hypocrites fall away and perish.

This double seal answers to the two parts of the covenant : Jer. xxxii. 40. " And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This covenant shall not fail on God's part, for it hath this seal, " The Lord knoweth them that are his ;" nor on the part of the saints, for it hath this seal, " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."—Let us attend,

1. To the seal itself, which, in its general nature, is a command of sanctification ; in which consider, —to whom it is directed, upon whom this awful charge is laid. They are the Lord's own words, directed to every one that nameth the name of his Son, that is, to all who profess Christ. And this character of professors serves not only to distinguish them from those without the church, who are incapable of apostacy ; but also shews the obligation laid on them to holiness by their profession, the holy name named by them binding them to a holy life. The inconsistency between the holy profession and an unholy life, which, though men join together, God will have separated sooner or later, for he will strip them either of their fair name, or their foul heart and life, in time or in eternity. Consider—the duty commanded, " to depart from iniquity," as from a thing one formerly stood to and followed. Iniquity is that thing which we all naturally follow as a master and leader ; but there must be a falling off from it, an
apostacy,

apostacy, or falling away from sin, (as the word imports). And this is the way to prevent apostacy from the Lord; for this does import, that it is some one iniquity or other indulged, and left to reign in the heart, which betrays professors into apostacy, as Judas, Demas, &c.—Consider,

2. How this can be a seal to secure the saints and elect ones from apostacy, since it is but a commandment?—To this I answer, That the nature of the preceding seal would seem to have required this expression, “And they that are his depart from iniquity.” But it is in form of a command, to shew that the saints depart from iniquity by choice, and that they are by the Lord himself powerfully determined to this choice; so that their perseverance is both rational and gracious.—It is a command, at the same time it is a powerful and efficacious command of God, like that in Gen. i. 3. “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light;” a command which effects what it requires in all who are his. It is such a command as that in Numb. xvi. 26. (quoted above), which brought away from the tents of Dathan and Abiram, all who were not to be swallowed up with them. And this command is going through wherever the gospel is preached, and will go till the last day; like a brisk wind separating the corn from the chaff, carrying away from the tents of sin all who are ordained to eternal life, though others dwell on in them still. Thus, though the profane and hypocritical, and all who are not the Lord’s, are still held by some one bond of sin or other which is never broken; yet this powerful word looses the bands of all sin, sets them and their sins asunder, and keeps them asunder, who, being sealed with the first seal, are his. And all this God’s efficacious word can do,

as

as well as keep the world from returning into its primitive mass of confusion : Heb. i. 3. "Up-
holding all things by the word of his power."
And so it is a seal securing them from apostacy.—
From this subject two general doctrines may be
proposed :

DOCT. I. That God doth charge all who name
the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

DOCT. II. That God's charge to depart from ini-
quity becomes infallibly effectual in all who
are his, so as that they do truly depart from
iniquity, while others hold it fast to their utter
ruin.—I begin with the

First, That God doth charge all that name the
name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

IN illustrating this point, I shall shew,

I. Who they are whom the Lord charges to de-
part from iniquity.

II. What is implied in departing from iniquity,
which God chargeth these to do.

III. How he charges these who name the name
of Christ to depart from iniquity.

IV. Why these particularly who name the name
of Christ are charged to do so.—And then add the
practical improvement.

WE are,

I. To shew who they are whom the Lord char-
ges to depart from iniquity.

The text tells you it is every one who names
the name of Christ. Thus, it is every one of you,
whatever your character be. The poor pagans,
amongst whom Christ is not named, God winks
at

at them; but he charges you, and every one of you, to depart from iniquity.—This charge is to you,

1. Baptised persons, capable to discern betwixt good and evil; the name of Christ is called upon you, and you name him; God charges you to depart from iniquity. You are engaged to be the Lord's, to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. You have no liberty to follow your lusts and the vanity of your minds. You are charged, as God's subjects, to have no more converse with his enemies; since you have given up your names to Christ, you are to dwell no more in the tents of sin. There is no exception of the young more than the old, but every one who nameth the name of Christ is to depart from iniquity.—The charge is to you,

2. Who profess faith in Christ, and hope of salvation through him. You name his name, and therefore you are charged. Although, perhaps, you will not so much as bow a knee to God, nor have so much as a form of godliness, yet you have not renounced the faith, nor your part in Christ; therefore, since you retain his name, and will be called Christians, depart from iniquity; live like Christians, and not like those who never heard of Christ.—The charge is to you,

3. Who pray to God through Christ. You name the name of Christ, and therefore are charged to depart from iniquity. Some of you, perhaps, pray only sometimes, as if you had more necessary business than serving the Lord; some pray ordinarily, yet go on in some sinful course or other; as if God was only to be served with fair words, and your lusts with the whole course of your life. But though this be your situation, this charge God lays on you notwithstanding, Depart from iniquity.—This charge is to you,

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4. Who

4. Who profess faith in Christ, and holiness of life also. You name the name of Christ, and therefore you should depart from iniquity. Are there not many such, whose lives are miserably stained in points of immorality, who walk most unsuitably to their character, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of? Rom. ii. 23. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" God charges you to walk up to your character, to your profession, and to depart from iniquity.—This charge is,

Lastly, To communicants, who name the name of Christ in a most solemn manner, by sitting down at his table, before God, angels, and men. This charge is to you. You have named this name, and gone back to those iniquities of which you were convinced. Are there not some who have adventured to stretch forth their hand to the Lord at his table, and have quickly again stretched it out to their lusts? To you the Lord is saying, Quit your communicating, or your iniquity; join no more an unholy life to such a fair and flaming profession.

WE are now,

II. To shew what is implied in this departing from iniquity which God chargeth us to aim at.—Here,

1st, Let us inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. And,

2^{dly}, What of iniquity God charges us to depart from.—We are,

1st, To inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. There are five things which belong to it.—There is,

1. A giving up with our rest in sin. God says
of

of sin to all who name Christ, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Sinners, ye are settled on your lees, as wine on the dregs, but there must be a separation; you are dwelling in a dangerous place, like Lot in Sodom; lying among the pots, as the Israelites in Egypt; sleeping securely like the sluggard on his bed, "while his poverty cometh as one that travaileth, and his want as an armed man." God chargeth you to awake and bestir yourself, to spring to your feet, and prepare to make progress in the ways of holiness.—There is,

2. A going off from sin, and giving up with it: Job, xxxiv. 32. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." God is saying to you of sin's dominion, as he said to the Israelites at Horeb, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount; therefore up and be gone from the tents of wickedness; ye have dwelt too long in the tents of Mesech and Kedar." May not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. iv. 3. Ye "have long wandered on the mountains of vanity, come away from them now: Song, iv. 8. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." Bid a long farewell now, and turn your backs on the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.—There is,

3. A standing off from sin, as the word properly signifies: Prov. iv. 15. "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Keep yourselves at a distance. Stand off from it as from a fire that will consume you, as from a leprosy that will infect you, as from an unclean thing that will defile you, as from a sword and arrow which will pierce and wound you to death, as from a serpent whose biting and

stinging is poisonous, painful, and deadly.—There is,

4. A going off to the other side, namely, to Christ and holiness: Isa. lv. 7. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” There can be no neutrality in the matter betwixt sin and holiness, no standing between the two: “He that is not with me is against me,” saith Jesus; “and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad,” Matth. xii. 30. Sin and holiness are such opposites, that one of them must be predominant in every subject capable of either. Apostates from religion betake themselves to the other side, and they who run away from Christ, they list themselves under Satan’s banner; and so do those who fall away from sin, fall in with Christ and newness of life.—There is,

Lastly, A going farther and farther from sin. Even the saints must always be departing from it: Job, xi. 14. “If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.” The first departure of the saints in conversion, though it be sincere, is not perfect; but what is then begun, must be held on in the progress of sanctification, as a spring when opened, runs and runs on, till the mud be wholly removed out of the fountain. Prov. iv. 18. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” They, having this hope, purify themselves, even as God is pure, 1 John, iii. 3. And hence their departing from sin consists in daily mortification, and living more and more to righteousness.

Secondly, Let us inquire what of iniquity God charges us to depart from. It is the accursed thing,

thing, with which we have nothing to do. We must depart from all sin, from the whole of it.—We must depart,

1. From under the dominion of sin : Rom. vi. 12. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Sin has a dominion over all who are out of Christ. It commands their whole man. The motions of it are the laws they obey. It is a dominion which is opposed to Christ's ; in the one, grace reigns unto life ; but in the other, sin reigns unto death. Christ offers to break the bands of your yoke ; come then to him, and shake off the yoke of your sins, renounce your allegiance, withdraw and refuse obedience to your old masters ; say, 'What have I any more to do with idols ?'—We must depart,

2. From the practice of sin, Isa. lv. 7. quoted above. Give up with and put an end to your sinful courses ; be no longer workers of iniquity, for such workers will get a sad reward of their work, Matth. vii. 23. "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." To what purpose do men pretend to believe in Christ, while they are the servants of sin ? How can one serve two such contrary masters ? What avails the pretended belief of the truth, which purges not the heart and life of ungodliness and unrighteousness : Rom. i. 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Depart then from the practice of sin,—in your outward man, your life and conversation. God is saying to you this day, James, iv. 8. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Reform your lives, if ever you would have communion with God here or hereafter, Psal. xxiv. 3. 4. Isa. i. 16. "Wash you, make you clean ; put

away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil." Look to your conversation, see what is in it offensive to God, and dishonouring to his name, and depart from all this : Lam. iii. 40. " Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."——Turn from gross pollutions of the outward man, and live the Christian life, or give over the Christian name, Jer. vii. 9.—11. There have been sober Heathens, who were remarkable for their temperance, their justice in dealings, and, in a word, regular lives according to the precepts of morality. But how many Christians are there, whose lives are stained with profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, injustice, dishonesty, filthiness, and other gross pollutions, by reason of which the way of truth is evil spoken of ! God charges you, since ye name the name of Christ, to depart from these, upon the pain of eternal exclusion from his presence, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. Gal. v. 19.—21. Wherefore, let him that did these things do so no more.——Turn from the lesser pollutions of the outward man : Acts, xxiv. 16. " And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." A person may be drowned in a rivulet, as well as in the deep sea, if they take not heed to themselves. Vain and idle words, as well as vile and wicked ones, may ruin a man : Matth. xii. 36. 37. " But I say unto you, that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." There is a careless way of living, though not the way of open profanity, which yet is offensive to tender Christians, in which men swim to destruction in a stream of sins that few in the world

world make any account of, and they go to hell without making the sound of their feet to be heard by the way. Hear their doom, Psal. cxxv. 5. "As for such that turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," Eph. iv. 17. Look to the law and to the testimony; cleanse your way by these, Psal. cxix. 9. If the word of God condemn your practice, though all the world justify it, God charges you to depart from it.—Depart from the practice of sin in the inner man, James, iv. 8. (quoted above), Psal. xxiv. 3. 4. Sin may be beaten from the outworks, while it has retired in safety to the heart: there may in appearance be a clean life, while the heart is foul all over, and wickedness is practised at ease in the secret chambers of imagery. Therefore God charges you, as Jer. iv. 14. "O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—Turn, then, from *heart villainy*. Since the heart is as open to God as the life it is of little use to be as a whited sepulchre, while within we are full of rottenness, to clean the outside of the cup while the inside is full of ravening. Purge your hearts of speculative filthiness; away with filthy imaginations, impure thoughts, envy, covetousness, malice, 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2. Be as much concerned to crush these vipers in the shell, as to resist external actions.—Turn from heart-vanity, Eph. iv. 17: (quoted above). Vain thoughts are like idle words, offensive to God, and therefore hated and resisted by the godly: Psal. cxix. 113. "I hate vain thoughts." Vanity of heart is the next step to, and paves the way for villainy

ness of heart and life. It is the house swept and garnished, to which the devil returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. Therefore labour to get your hearts filled with good motions and holy desires, regulated by the fear of God, warmed with his love, guarded by watchfulness, and so busied as that ye may not feed on wind, but may be taken up about what may be of good use, both profitable and pleasing.

3. Depart from the devising and contriving of sin. A good man may be surprised into sin, but for a man to sit down and contrive sinful actions, is to make his heart a forge for Satan. To sleep and wake in pursuing the contrivance of sin, is the character of a wicked man: Psal. xxxvi. 4. "He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil." Thus men set themselves wilfully in an ill way, which grieves the Spirit, extinguishes his motions, and wastes the conscience. Men may shew their worldly wit in this way, that they are wise to do evil; and they may, for a time, prosper in their ways, and bring their wicked devices to pass, Psal. xxxvii. 7. But such a habitual practice will prove a man graceless, 1 John, iii. 8. 9. and will be bitterness in the end, for evil doers shall be cut off, Psal. xxxvii. 9. Depart then from the devising of sin, or quit the name of Christians.

4. Depart from the love of sin: Ezek. xiv. 6. "Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations." 1 John, ii. 15. 16. While the love of sin reigns in the heart, though they may seem to depart from it, the devil has a pledge of them that they will not go far away, but that they will come again back to him. This is that which makes so many communicants a scandal to
their

their profession; so many who put their hand to the plough, to look back. They still love sinful liberty, their hearts are not divorced from their lusts, and so they return to their idols. If you name the name of Christ, and profess love to him, God charges you,——To turn your esteem of sin into disdain and contempt of it, Isa. ii. 20. "Cast your idols to the moles and to the bats." Let grace and holiness have the ascendant of sin and wickedness in your esteem. Account them no more the happy men who take to themselves a liberty in sinful courses, but as men who are most miserable, vile, and pitiful, as slaves to sin, and in the road to destruction, Psal. xv. 4.——You are charged to turn your love of sin into hatred and abhorrence of it, Psal. xcvi. 10. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Hate it as evil, as the worst of evils, worse than any sufferings; hate it as hell: Rom. xii. 9. "Abhor that which is evil." Hate it as destructive to the soul, as dishonouring and displeasing to God. Abhor it as you would do a cup of poison, though a golden cup. Your love of it must be turned into loathing. Look not only upon it as an ill thing, but as a filthy and a loathsome thing, at which one's heart is apt to stand, Isa. xxx. 22. Ezek. xviii. 31. You have long kept at it as a sweet morsel. Let your soul apprehend its real filthiness, so as that you may vomit it up again.—Your former cleaving unto sin must be turned into longing to get rid of it, Rom. vii. 24. "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Long to be free of it, as a prisoner longs for the opening of the prison-doors, as a captive for his liberty. Look on it as a burden on your back, which makes you stoop; as a burden on your head, which perplexes you how to get free of it; as a
burden

burden on your stomach, which you will endeavour to cast up. This is the heart's departing from sin, without which all other departures from it will be to little purpose.

5. Depart from the enjoyment of the fruits of sin. The righteous man is one who despises the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil. When lovers part, they give back their tokens; and when a sinner parts with his sin in earnest, he will part with its fruits, whatever advantages he has by them. This is so evident even to a natural conscience awakened, that Judas, repenting of his betraying of Christ, could not longer bruik the thirty pieces he had made by his sin; and Zaccheus, sincerely repenting, is ready to make restitution, Luke, xix. 8. It was Balaam's character, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. And he who wilfully keeps the fruit of his sin, thereby nails down his own soul in a state of impenitency, so that he cannot repent of that sin; he binds the guilt of it on himself as with bands of iron and brass, so that it cannot be forgiven while this disposition remains. Wherefore purge out this leaven, and cast away the fruits with the tree.

6. Depart from the occasions of sin, and all temptations to it, Ezek. xiv. 6. (quoted above): It is vain to pretend to depart from sin, when men do not watch against the occasions to it. They who in a siege resolve really not to give up the town, will defend the outworks as long as they can. These do not depart from, but run into sin, who cast themselves into the way of temptations. Therefore says Solomon: Prov. iv. 14. 15. "Enter
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ter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass over it, turn from it, and pass away." Mind the apostle's advice, 1 Thes. v. 22. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Occasions and temptations will seek us out while in this evil world; but let every one who nameth the name of Christ be upon his guard against them.

Lastly, Depart from the workers of iniquity: 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Let birds of a feather flock together; but if ye name the name of Christ, depart from the tents of wicked men. True, we cannot altogether shun them while we are in the world: but to make choice of ungodly persons for our companions, is the way to ruin: Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Wherefore, if you be setting your faces heavenward, depart from those whose faces are towards hell: Acts, ii. 40. "With many words did Peter testify and exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Psal. xii. 7. "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N LVII.

2 TIM. ii. 19. *And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered to whom the charge is addressed, and what is imported in the charge, "depart from iniquity,"

WE now proceed,

III. To explain the nature of this charge, or to shew how the Lord charges those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.—You may know the nature of this charge given to them in the text, by these following properties.—It is,

1. An universal charge, and this in two respects. 1st, In respect of the persons naming. *Every one*, says the text, *who nameth the name of Christ*: there is no exception in the charge, it is directed to all and sundry who profess Christ, or who

who are called Christians, whether ye be communicants or not. Since you are Christians by name, you are charged by the God who made you, to betake yourselves to the Christian life, and depart from iniquity. Whether you be high and honourable, or low and mean in the world, whatever difference is betwixt you and others, God makes none in this charge. But whether young or old, you are included in the charge, and you cannot resist it, but at your highest peril.—*2dly*, The charge is universal in respect of the sins which you are to depart from: Ezek. xviii. 31. “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” They are all and every one of them dishonouring to God, displeasing to him, disagreeable to the holy name by which you are called, and therefore all of them are to be departed from.—You must part with your fashionable sins, (with which, to be neighbour-like, you comply, though you should be a wonder to many), as well as with unfashionable ones, to which you have no temptation: Rom. xii. 2. “And be not conformed to this world.”—You must depart from your gainful sins, as well as those by which you make no profit: Matth. xvi. 26. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—You must part with the sins of your calling and station in the world, as well as those which lie out of your road. This is an ordinary screen for sin; but see Luke, iii. 12. 13. 14. You must part with little sins, as well as with great sins; with your darling sin, your bosom-idol, as well as with others less beloved; with the sins of your constitution, that sin which most easily besets you,

Heb. xii. 1. ; in one word, with all your sins of heart and life.— It is,

2. A peremptory charge : Acts, xvii. 30. “ And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” There are no *ifs* or *ands* for your keeping your sins, or any of them. Many go about to compound the matter with God. They will part with such and such a sin, they will only harbour this and that, which is but a little one, a right eye, &c ; but in vain, you must part with all. If you would give rivers of oil, or the fruit of your body for your sins, you cannot be allowed to keep any one of these accursed things.—It is,

3. A charge for the present time : Psal. xcv. 7. “ To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” It requires obedience upon hearing of it, a speedy and quick compliance, like that, Psal. cxix. 60. “ I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.” You are not allowed to advise another day, whether you will depart from iniquity or not. For ought you know, it is now or never with you : 2 Cor. vi. 2. “ Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.” And if you refuse this once more, God may take you at your refusal, and determine your eternal state by it, Prov. i. 24. and downwards. Often refusals are most dangerous : Prov. xxix. 1. “ He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”—It is,

4. A charge with certification, a charge upon your highest peril : Heb. xii. 25. “ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” You are charged to depart
from

from iniquity, as you will answer it before the Judge of the quick and dead. There is in this instance a fivefold certification.—There is this certification,

(1.) That if you do it not, you shall incur the high displeasure of God : Rom. i. 18. “ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Who knows the power of His wrath who is able to frown the creature into the lowest abyfs of misery ? His anger makes the hills to tremble, the mountains to smoke ; alas ! how can worm man bear it ?—There is this certification,

(2.) That if you do it not, you shall have no communion with God in duties : Amos, iii. 3. “ Can two walk together, except they be agreed ?” You may go to your prayers, but God will not be found of you ; he will turn the back and not the face to you : Pſal. lxvi. 18. “ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” You ſhall find a ſeparation-wall built up between God and you : Iſa. lix. 2. “ But your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” You may come to a communion-table, but your harboured luſts ſhall ſeparate betwixt God and you : this will make it a ſapleſs meal to you.—There is this certification,

(3.) That if you do it not, your beſt ſervices and duties will not be accepted, but rejected as an abomination. Remember that God requires obedience rather than ſacrifices ; and it is in vain for men to think to pleaſe God in the external acts of devotion, while they do not make conſcience of obeying his commandments in holineſs of life : Prov. xxviii. 9. “ He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer ſhall be an

abomination." Will men dare to go over the belly of their duty enjoined them from the Lord's word, without ever aiming to comply with it, and yet think to communicate acceptably?—There is this certification,

(4.) That if you do it not, you will get a curse instead of a blessing in your approaches to God, Mal. ii. 2. 3. God has made some monuments of his vengeance, who have presumed in their sins unrepented of to approach his presence in a solemn manner, Levit. x. 1. 3. But because God does not strike men often this way, there are found those who, living in secret wickedness, come to the Lord's table to cloak their wickedness, little considering the blasting curse to which they expose their souls.—There is this certification,

(5.) That if you do it not, you shall perish in your iniquity : Heb. xii. 14. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." True holiness is in all manner of conversation. One thing lacking will ruin and sink the ship of your souls, as well as a thousand.

WE are now,

IV. To shew why those particularly who name the name of Christ, are charged to depart from iniquity. All to whom the gospel comes are so charged, but those who profess Christ are in a special manner thus charged.—For,

1. The practice of iniquity is a contradiction to their profession ; so that they cannot have this practice, but they give the lie to their profession. An holy profession, and an unholy practice, are such inconsistencies, as that the one overthrows the other ; "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion

munion hath light with darknes? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14.

15. By their profession they are friends of God, by their practice they are enemies; by the one they carry Christ's yoke, by the other sin and Satan's. Thus the life is woven into one practical lie.

2. Whosoever partakes of Christ's salvation, departs from iniquity; for salvation from sin is the leading and chief part of Christ's salvation: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Therefore none can justly claim Christ as his Saviour, who still lives in sin. Hence we are told, James, ii. 17. "That faith without works is dead." And a holy life is just as necessary to evidence our interest in Christ, as light is necessary to evidence that the sun is risen.

3. The practice of iniquity in such, is in a peculiar manner offensive to God, and grieving to his Spirit. Sin is offensive to his holiness, wherever it is found; but the offence is doubled in those who name the name of Christ: Amos, iii.

2. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Friends wounds pierce deepest; and the nearer that the relation is betwixt the offender and the offended, the offence is the worse taken, Psa. xli. 9. and lv. 12. 13. The treachery of a traitor is more grievous than the enmity of an open enemy, and more severely punished; and accordingly the impiety of those who name the name of Christ, is more heinous than that of others who do not: Matth. xi. 22. "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement, than for you." The breaking of a covenant, which all the baptised as well as communicants have entered into,

is most aggravating, both in respect of sin and punishment. See Matth. xxiv. 51. Compare Jerem. xviii. 34.

Lastly, It reflects a peculiar dishonour upon God; such sins bring a scandal upon that holy name and religion which they profess: Rom. ii. 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." The loose lives of professors expose religion to the ridicule and reproach of its enemies; so that they are the Judases by whom the Son of man was betrayed. Religion is the worse of them; and it meets with worse entertainment in the world, that workers of iniquity do profess it.

WE are now,

V. To make some practical improvement; and this,

First, In an use of information.—This doctrine shews us,

1. That all and every one amongst us, by the authority of God who made us, and in whose name we were baptised, are obliged to depart from iniquity. You cannot keep it without rebellion against your sovereign Lord, without treachery and breach of your covenant. O that men would seriously reflect on the authority they are under! consider the charge given them from heaven, and how they will answer for their disobedience to it, when God rises up to judgement.—This shews us,

2. That for men to abstain from the sacrament of the Supper, to this end that they may not be abridged of their liberty in sinful courses, is not only impious, but childish and foolish. It is impious, as it is a determined disobedience to God's express charge.—It is foolish, because this liberty is already cut off from them, and renounced by them

them, by their taking on the profession and badge of Christianity.—Their abstaining from the sacrament of the Supper, unless also they renounce their baptism, and all their part in Christ, will not take their name out of this charge from heaven.—We are instructed,

3. That they are bold adventurers, and run a dreadful risk, who come in their sins, unrepented of, and not sincerely resolved against, and sit down at the Lord's table: 1 Cor. xi. 29. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." It is one of the most solemn ways of naming the name of Christ, to communicate at his table. Whoso partakes of this bread and cup do solemnly and practically confess, before God, angels, and men, that they take Christ, and part with their lusts, that they proclaim an irreconcilable war against the devil, the world, and the flesh, according to this charge. And for such to be still in the enemy's camp, or to return after the sacrament to their former known sinful courses, is solemnly to lie, and to mock God, the consequences of which will be most terrible: Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

4. Behold here how the Lord's table is fenced, by a fence of God's own making: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." There is a great privilege before us, the making a most solemn profession of the name of Christ, and our communion with him. Here in the text are God's terms of admission to the privileges, and these are most reasonable; which are, that those who shall profess their coming over to Christ's side, shall desert the enemy's camp; if they be for the light, they must renounce the works

works of darkness ; if they take Christ, they must let these go. You hear the terms ; lay your hand to your heart, and see what you will do. If men will not depart from iniquity, let them not take Christ's name in vain. Our text debars from this holy table, whosoever will indulge themselves in, and will not part with, any known sin whatsoever ; particularly,

(1.) All neglecters of the duties of piety towards God. Surely prayerless persons, and such as only call on God now and then, slights of God's ordinances, his word, his Sabbaths, depart not from iniquity, but live in it, and cannot with a good conscience sit down at his table. Though they may deceive men, they cannot deceive God, who says to them, Psa. l. 10. 17. "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Depart from these, then, or presume not to sit down at the Lord's table.

(2.) All who make not conscience of their duty towards men, righteousness, mercy, and charity. Those who can wrong their neighbours, by undermining and cheating them, picking and stealing from them, by unfaithfulness in what they have of other men's among their hands, are fitter to join a society of robbers, than to sit down at a communion-table : Jerem. vii. 11. "Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes ? behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord." See 1 Cor. vi. 9.—Those who shut up their bowels from the poor and needy, who oppress and grind the faces of others, are utterly unfit for this seal of God's mercy.—Those who live in hatred of their neighbours, in malice and envy, and who cannot be reconciled to, nor forgive

forgive those who have done them a wrong, are unfit for this seal of God's pardon : Matth. vi. 15. " But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Depart from these, or presume not to go to the table of the Lord ; for with a good conscience you cannot come there, unless you be resolved from the heart to be conscientious in all your relations, conscientious neighbours, parents, children, masters, servants, &c.

3. All those who are not sober in their lives : Titus, ii. 12. The gospel " teaches, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Can a man who will not quit the table of drunkenness, be fit for the Lord's table. Do but imagine, a person sitting at the Lord's table one day, and getting drunk another day ; what a monstrous and horrible thing is this ! Cor. x. 21. " Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." Those who are wedded to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, will but get a stroke to their souls by such a solemn approach. Depart from intemperance, then, and from the vain way of the world, or presume not to approach this holy table.

4. All those who suffer their tongues to go at random, and make no conscience of their words. It is the character of persons very different from the people of God, which you have : Psal. xii. 2. 3. 4. " They speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak : the Lord will cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things ; who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own : who is lord over us ?" Let swearers and cursers take heed to this, and let them not deceive themselves with this,

this, that they do it only in a passion; let them soberly consider what agreement there is betwixt a solemn profession of the holy name one day, and a profaning it another; betwixt their professing faith in Christ, bringing their consciences to his blood, and their endeavours for God's blessing one day, and another day swearing by their faith, their conscience, and cursing themselves or others. Let liars, filthy speakers, slanderers, and back-biters, who use their tongues so busily in the service of the devil, know what they have to expect, if they approach the table of the Lord, Psal. l. 16.—23. And let all know, that a loose unbridled tongue will prove a man's religion vain; and this vain religion will leave him in the lurch at length: James, i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain." Depart therefore from all these, or presume not to approach the Lord's table.

5. All those who make no conscience of inward purity, the keeping of the heart: Matth. v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Outside religion may give you outward privileges, but it will leave you to break your teeth on the shell, without ever enjoying the kernel of them. Speculative impurities and sins entertained in the heart, will exclude you out of heaven; and, before the Lord, will exclude you from his table, if you are not repenting of them, and resolving, through grace, to wrestle against them. Depart also from these, or venture not to approach this holy table.

6. All those who entertain and indulge themselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, or are not content to have their sin
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and duty discovered to them : Psal. lxvi. 18. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." One thing may mar all in the bargain betwixt Christ and your souls. If one lust be reserved and excepted, it is no bargain : Mark, x. 21. 22. " Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest ; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." Men, then, should soberly consider, with what conscience they can sit down at the Lord's table, while they are living in sin, in that which they are convinced to be sin, and yet are never endeavouring to amend it.

5. Behold how the door of access to the Lord's table is opened to all true penitents, whose hearts are loosed from, and set against, all sin. Those who would now sincerely depart from their iniquity, and turn from it without reserve to the Lord, are welcome to name the name of Christ, they have his Father's allowance for it : Isa. lv. 7. " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He saith not, that they who will name the name of Christ must be without iniquity ; there are none such in this lower world ; but they must depart from it, they must turn their backs on it, though it may tempt them ; they are to flee from it, though it may follow ; they are to resist it, nay, even though it attack them. Whosoever, then, is brought to be weary of their former sinful courses, are sincerely desirous of, and are resolving through grace to be the Lord's only, wholly, and for ever, to take Christ for their Saviour

this, that they do it only in a passion; let them soberly consider what agreement there is betwixt a solemn profession of the holy name one day, and a profaning it another; betwixt their professing faith in Christ, bringing their consciences to his blood, and their endeavours for God's blessing one day, and another day swearing by their faith, their conscience, and cursing themselves or others. Let liars, filthy speakers, slanderers, and back-biters, who use their tongues so busily in the service of the devil, know what they have to expect, if they approach the table of the Lord, Psal. l. 16.—23. And let all know, that a loose unbridled tongue will prove a man's religion vain; and this vain religion will leave him in the lurch at length: James, i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain." Depart therefore from all these, or presume not to approach the Lord's table.

5. All those who make no conscience of inward purity, the keeping of the heart: Matth. v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Outside religion may give you outward privileges, but it will leave you to break your teeth on the shell, without ever enjoying the kernel of them. Speculative impurities and sins entertained in the heart, will exclude you out of heaven; and, before the Lord, will exclude you from his table, if you are not repenting of them, and resolving, through grace, to wrestle against them. Depart also from these, or venture not to approach this holy table.

6. All those who entertain and indulge themselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, or are not content to have their sin
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and duty discovered to them : Psal. lxvi. 18. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." One thing may mar all in the bargain betwixt Christ and your souls. If one lust be reserved and excepted, it is no bargain : Mark, x. 21. 22. " Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest ; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." Men, then, should soberly consider, with what conscience they can sit down at the Lord's table, while they are living in sin, in that which they are convinced to be sin, and yet are never endeavouring to amend it.

5. Behold how the door of access to the Lord's table is opened to all true penitents, whose hearts are loosed from, and set against, all sin. Those who would now sincerely depart from their iniquity, and turn from it without reserve to the Lord, are welcome to name the name of Christ, they have his Father's allowance for it : Isa. lv. 7. " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He saith not, that they who will name the name of Christ must be without iniquity ; there are none such in this lower world ; but they must depart from it, they must turn their backs on it, though it may tempt them ; they are to flee from it, though it may follow ; they are to resist it, nay, even though it attack them. Whosoever, then, is brought to be weary of their former sinful courses, are sincerely desirous of, and are resolving through grace to be the Lord's only, wholly, and for ever, to take Christ for their Saviour

viour from sin and wrath; to take holiness for their way, and God's word for their rule; they have access to the covenant; and to the seal of the covenant, in a comfortable way.

Lastly, This shews us the necessity of self-searching; examining ourselves, on this occasion, 1 Cor. xi. 28. Communicants should examine themselves beforehand as to their sins, as well as with respect to their graces, since God has commanded every one that nameth the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. Make not superficial work of communicating; but examine your heart and life for the time past, that ye may discover what has been and what is your iniquity or iniquities, from which you are now to depart: Lamen. iii. 40. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." One reason why there is so little reformation on the back of communions is; that people do not beforehand take a view of what is wrong, they do not consider what they are to endeavour the reformation of. Now, if a person do not know what he should depart from; how can he depart from it? Wherefore, the same authority which charges you to depart from iniquity, charges you to take a view of what has been amiss in your ways. Take some time for this, and be as particular as you can, to search out the old leaven, and devote to a curse what you find out. Examine how your hearts stand affected to your sins for the time present, whether you really repent of them or not, whether you be ashamed of them before the Lord, are heartily grieved for them, hate them, and are longing to be rid of them, to be delivered from the guilt, the stain, the power, and the indwelling of them, or not. If you have not attained to this, you are, while in this case, utterly unfit for a communion-table. If you have, the master of the
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the feast makes you welcome. If your repentance be real, it will reach to all your known sins whatsoever, without exception, both the root and the branches, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—Examine how your hearts stand affected to them for the time to come; if you be sincerely resolved, through grace, on newness of life. Surely it is meet at all times, but especially before a communion-occasion, to be thus resolved: Job, xxxiv. 31. 32. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." If you cannot think to give up with your sinful courses, or to live without them, do not mock God, and bring more guilt upon your souls, by sitting down at his table: But if you would wish to be holy as God is holy, and, under a sense of your inability to subdue sin, desire to betake yourself to Christ for his sanctifying Spirit, resolving through grace to watch against sin, and resist the motions of it, ye are welcome guests to the Lord's table.—We shall only add,

Secondly, An use of exhortation. We exhort you to depart from iniquity, turn from your sins, since you name the name of Christ. Let none think to find shelter for their sins under this, namely, that they intend not to take the sacrament. You have taken a sacrament already, which obliges you to this, and therefore I charge one and all of you to depart from your iniquity this day.—If you will not, know the same Christ, whose name you name, while you will not depart from iniquity, will be your great enemy: Luke, xix. 27. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Sin is the great make-bate betwixt God and the sinner,

and the friendship with your lusts will be enmity with the Lord. Hereupon I would ask you, How think ye to live on God's ground, amongst the midst of his creatures, while God is your enemy? Know ye not that all the creatures are banded together against him to whom God is an enemy? Does not the meat thou eatest say, Lord, if thou wilt allow me, I will chock this rebel? The earth, I will swallow him up who will not depart from iniquity?—Again, let me ask you, How will you look the king of terrors in the face? What comfort will these sins which thou now holdest fast leave thee, when the old sinful tabernacle begins to fall down, the soul to flee away, and the carcase is brought down to a grave, both to be imprisoned, the former in hell, the latter in the grave, till the resurrection? How will you bear to be raised up, and sifted before the great tribunal, to answer for all those sins you will not now depart from, and to receive the eternal reward of your works?

Particularly, O communicants! presume not to sit down at the Lord's table, without departing from iniquity. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may keep the feast.—O communicants! will ye betray the Son of man with a kiss? When sitting down at his table, you profess yourselves to be his friends, members of his family. But if you depart not from iniquity, you will betray him as sure as Judas did, for you are in league with his enemies. And your vows at the communion-table will become like Sampson's green withs, which were broken at the first onset, and you will return back again with more eagerness to these sins from which you never really departed: you know what will be the end of such conduct.—Will ye go out against Christ as against a thief with swords and staves? You do it by going in your sins unrepented

repented of to his table. We are to commemorate his love in dying for our sins, sins which furnished a Judas to betray him, nails to pierce him, and a spear to enter into his side. And will you presume on this exercise, holding fast these sins, and refusing to let them go? If you would proclaim war against Christ, instead of sitting down at his table, you could reach him no other way, than you will do by holding fast iniquity. It is the day of his espousals, of his coronation; let us not make it a day of crucifying him afresh.—Would you see Jesus, and in him God reconciled to your souls, blessing you with the seal of your pardon, peace, and right to eternal life? Come away to Christ freely from your sins, make your most beloved lusts stepping-stones, over the belly of which you will come to his table, putting a bill of divorce into the hand of them all, with a sincere resolution, through grace, never to entertain them willingly again. In this event, I know nothing to make the separation betwixt him and you: Isa. lix. 1. “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” But, alas! some say, I cannot get rid of my sins. To this I answer, Is thine iniquity thy burden, which thou wouldst as fain be rid of, as of an oppressing weight? Then thy heart is away from it, and God accepts thee in this case, sincerely, though not perfectly, to be departed from it. It is one thing to be sitting still in a house, willingly entertaining a guest; another, to be labouring to get away, though the troublesome guest will not part with us. If the latter be thy case, you may come to the Lord at his table, with hopes of welcome, you will then be strengthened for the struggle, and shall get the seal of complete victory in due time. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LVIII.

2 TIM. ii. 19. *And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, offered all that was intended on the first doctrine taken from this subject, I now proceed to a consideration of

DOCT. II. That God's charge to depart from iniquity is infallibly effectual in all who are his, so as that they do truly depart from iniquity, while others hold it fast to their own ruin, Acts, xiii. 48. Matth. i. 21.—or briefly thus, That all the elect of God shall depart from iniquity.

In explaining this, I shall,

I. Shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his.

II. Evince

II. Evince the truth of this doctrine, that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God.

III. We shall, in the conclusion, make some practical improvement.

WE are,

I. To shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his. I shewed before, from what of sin we are to depart. And, in general, this charge is effectual, in all the parts of it, in them who are the Lord's. But more particularly,

1. It is effectual in them who are his, in this life. Here the work is truly and happily begun; they all become saints on earth, who shall be saints in heaven, Psal. xvi. 3. Though by nature they are wild olives, growing in the forest of the world lying in wickedness, they are plucked up and planted in the nursery of grace, where they grow till transplanted into paradise; while their fellows stand still in that forest till cut down for the fire. It is effectual in this life, in a gospel-sense, though not in a law-sense, in respect of a perfection of parts, though not of degrees. And this in three respects:

(1.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they come freely away from sin in conversion. Some may be longer in coming away than others, they may abide in the tents of wickedness, after other sealed ones are gone, but they shall infallibly follow sooner or later: For, says Jehovah, Joel, iii. 21. "I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." This one and the other may often be passed by; while others are taken, who shall certainly have a place in the building of mercy.

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Here consider the following things:—That all mankind by nature lie in wickedness: They are dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. They are in the devil's camp, they are bound with the bands of wickedness, estranged from God and all that is truly good. They will not leave it, because it is their element.—Consider also, that yet among them God has some which he has chosen to life, and whom, in his eternal purpose of love to their souls, he has sealed as his own, to bring them away, and to make them partakers of his glory.—Consider farther, that the alarm of the gospel comes indefinitely to all, whether they be the Lord's or not. It comes to the devil's camp, and says, 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." It says as Moses to Israel, in respect of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." Or as the angel to Lot, "Escape for thy life: look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain," Gen. xix. 17.—Consider, that as God knows who among them are his, so he infallibly brings them away from among the rest, in obedience to the gospel-alarm: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believe," Acts, xiii. 48. This march out of the devil's camp, was begun at the first preaching of the gospel in paradise, and is continued to this day, though sometimes more, sometimes fewer go off together. And it will be continued until there be not one of them that belong to God left among them; and then comes the end.

Now, in conversion, the Spirit sounding the alarm, Depart ye, depart ye; they that are the Lord's are impressed by it: so the dead soul awakes,
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the impenitent heart melts, they spring to their feet, resolved and determined to depart from the tents of sin. The devil and those who are his, do what they can, by allurements and threats, to hold them still; but under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's host, they march out with banners displayed, and depart freely from iniquity; the trumpet still sounding, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." As to the nature of their departure, we observe the following things.

[1.] They depart from sin sincerely. They depart from it, because it is a departing from God, contrary to his holy nature and law; they depart from it as sin, Luke, xv. 18. They who belong to God, leaving their sins, leave them not from the inferior motives *only* of danger to themselves, here or hereafter; but from higher motives also, because they are offensive to God, they dishonour his Son, grieve his Spirit, transgress his law, and deface his image. Thus the worthy communicant reforms, and departs from iniquity.—Here, however, there may be proposed this

Question, How do they with those sins from which they formerly departed from lower motives only, or which left them ere they left them?—To this I answer, That they do with them as men use to do with those who die by their own hands. They bury them disgracefully, and throw stones upon their graves. They look back to them, and loath them. They left them at first for their own sake; they go farther away from them for God's sake. They neglected them before, as having no use for them; they abhor them now for their intrinsic loathsomeness. They were hanging before betwixt heaven and earth, like Absalom on the oak; now they thrust the darts into their hearts, and throw them into a pit.

[2.] They

[2.] They depart from iniquity voluntarily: not out of constraint, but choice: Pf. cxix. 30. "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgements have I laid before me." They do not cast away sin only as one would do a live coal out of his bosom, because it will burn him; or a serpent, because it will sting him; but as a loathsome, unclean thing, because it will defile him. Some depart from their iniquity against their wills. They part with it as Phaltiel with his undutiful wife, 2 Sam. iii. 16. They dwell in the tents of sin, and will not move hence, till there is no abiding longer there for them; as the covetous man parts with the world at death, or when it is violently taken from him; whether he will or not, he must let it go. But this departure is not lasting, such will go back again, Psal. lxxviii. 34.—37.—And so hence there occurs a

Question, May not a person be driven from his iniquity by the terror of God? To this I answer, I conceive that when the time comes, at which a person who belongs to God is to depart from iniquity, there are two trumpets which sound in his ears. The *first* trumpet is that of the law, which is so terrible, that it makes the man's soul quake within him, and makes an earthquake in the devil's camp to him, so that he finds no more firm footing there, nor rest as before, but he must flee for his life in consternation. But if there be no more, he may flee from one part of it to another, but he will still abide within the trenches. The *second* trumpet is that of the gospel, the still small voice, founding pardon, peace, welcome, to Christ's camp, and to the feast of fat things, to all those who will depart from iniquity. This takes the trembling sinner by the heart, and makes him come away freely and voluntarily from iniquity:

iniquity: So that, although the trumpet of the law should cease, this charms him so as he can stay no longer in the tents of sin, Hosea, ii. 14. and iii. 5.

[3.] They depart from iniquity resolutely, absolutely, and unconditionally, cost what it will; they cannot, they will not, they must not stay. Others may do as they please; but, with Joshua, they peremptorily say, "We will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15. If all the world should sit still, they will go, though they should go alone. Satan may frame many objections against their departure, and enter into terms for their staying, as Pharaoh with the Israelites, about their departure from Egypt. But converting grace makes their ears deaf to all proposals of this nature. If they should leave all they have in the world, they must leave sin, Luke, xiv. 26.; if it should be never so much to their loss as to their temporal interest, they will depart; if they must go through fire and water, make their way out of it through briars and thorns,—any thing but sin: Rev. xiv. 4. "These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. He whose departing from iniquity depends on *ifs* and *ands*, effectual grace has not yet reached his heart.

[4.] They depart from iniquity speedily, without delays: Psal. cxix. 60. "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." Many good purposes come to nothing by delays. The man intends to part with such and such a sin, to comply with such and such a duty, only he cannot do it yet. And whereas there is one hindrance in his way at present, there are two after; and so the project flies up for good and all. But they
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who belong to God are snatched away as brands out of the burning. They will delay no longer to depart from sin, than one delays to fling a burning coal out of his bosom, or a stinging serpent. Being determined to depart, they are determined to depart without delay, because a moment's delay in this matter may be an eternal loss.

[5.] They depart from it universally: Psal. cxix. 104. "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."—Ezek. xviii. 31. "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Whoso departs from one sin sincerely, and as sin, departs from all sin known to them to be such; because the reason moving him to depart from one, is to be found in all. Every sin is a deadly wound to the soul; and therefore, if but one remain uncured, the man is a dead man: Matth. v. 29. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." One sin retained will make all our reformation naught, as Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal's concubine, was the death of his seventy sons by his wives, excepting one, Jud. ix. 5. Hence those who belong to God depart from all sin without exception, however others may have their reserved idols. Thus they depart from that sin which is the sin of their constitution, that sin which attends their calling in the world, that sin to which they have the strongest and most frequent temptations: Psal. xviii. 23. "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." That sin which most easily besets us, Heb. xii. 1. is the predominant evil the heart must
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be loosed from, the right hand, and right eye, the one thing lacking, which mars all other things; from which, however loth they be to part, they will be made willing to part with it in the day of power. Thus, all who belong to God do come freely away from sin in conversion; and so the charge is effectual.

(2.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they never again return to it as formerly, but persevere in that course of holiness which is once begun. They who have once freely departed from the tents of wickedness, shall never again come back to them, they shall never mix again with the ungodly world, from among whom they have come out: Psal. xii. 7. "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Converting grace fixes a gulf betwixt the two, which they shall never repass. I own a gracious soul may fall from its first love, to carnal sluggishness, remissness, and indispotion for duties. Thus it was with the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4. Yea, they may fall into some enormous offences and gross transgressions of the law, as Peter did, and they may for some time lie in these unrepented of, as David and Solomon did; and they may relapse into the same sins formerly mourned over, Rev. xxii. 8.; compare ch. xix. 10. Thus, Abraham denied his wife twice. They may thus fall after solemn engagements to the Lord, as Peter did, after the first communion, and after gracious manifestations, Song, v. 1.—3.—To be more particular,

[1.] They shall never fall back to sin, with the same heart and good-will which they had to it before; not with a full consent, but with reluctance: Rom. vii. 19. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that do I."

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They may be sin's captives while they are here, driven back to some iniquity or other by the force of temptation; but sin's ready subjects they shall never more be. There is a principle of grace within them, which, at the lowest ebb, will check that full spring-tide of sin which they were wont to have before they departed from it, Song, v. 2.

[2.] They shall not lie still in sin, but sooner or later rise again to repentance. So did Peter, David, and Solomon. They shall not live in the habitual practice of any known sin. Hypocrites, after solemn engagements to God, may return and live in the habitual practice of their former lusts; like the mixed multitude founding a retreat into Egypt, they may fall away, and never recover. But though a straying slave never be sought after, a straying son will be. Those who belong to God may fall in the way, but they shall never fall out of God's way of holiness: Job, xvii. 9. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Having once departed from iniquity, they shall hold on their way; for—he that set them on the way shall keep them in it: 2 Theff. iii. 3. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." The Lord is the keeper of all those who have departed from iniquity, and he watches night and day, Isa. xxvii. 2. They are kept by the word of God, which is a sufficient defence against the powers of darkness. Their keeper never leaves them, nor forsakes them, Heb. xiii. 5. When once Christ takes hold of a soul, he will never part with it again, however low the pass to which they may be brought: Psal. lxxiii. 23. "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand." None can loose his hold, nor pluck them out of his hand, John,

John, x. 28.—Again, they have an immortal principle within them for carrying them forward. The Spirit of Christ dwells in them for ever, John, xiv. 16. Grace is a never-dying seed, which remaineth in them, 1 John, iii. 9. This, by virtue of the covenant, secures the continuance of their departure from iniquity, Jer. xxxii. 40. Hence, when the believer steps aside from the Lord, there is still in him a restlessness, more or less, until he return, like the dove into the ark, Song, v. 2.—Farther, sin can never recover that dominion over him which it has lost, and that irrecoverably: Rom. vi. 14. “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” And though, in the war with sin, corruption may sometimes get the upper hand, yet grace shall overcome at length: Gen. xlix. 19. “Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last.”

3. It is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it in the progress of sanctification: Prov. iv. 18. “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day:” Isa. xl. 31. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,” &c.—Grace is of a growing nature; and though it grows not at all times, yet it does grow. The life of a saint is a going up out of the wilderness of this world; and the farther he goes, he is the nearer his journey’s end. And thus a gracious soul is still departing from iniquity, and shall depart.—He departs, by watching against it; and always the more watchful, the farther from it: Psal. xxxix.

1. “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” Any distance we can be at from sin while here, is a distance of opposition; and the more the Chri-

stian has his eyes in his head, to observe the motions of the enemy, to avoid occasions and temptations to sin, he is set at the greater distance from it. Unwatchfulness is the ruin of many. They who belong to God shall be made to watch; and if they be at a time taken nodding, it shall serve to make them more awake afterwards.—Again, they shall depart, by keeping up a struggle against sin: Gal. v. 17. “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” Sin may get quiet harbour in the breast of a hypocrite, but in those who are the Lord’s it can get no more ease than mud in a spring-well, where there will be a working it out: John, iv. 14. “The water that I shall give him,” saith Jesus, “shall be in him a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life.” And this struggle will continue as long as there is a Canaanite in the land; for it is not, as in the hypocrite, against some kind of sins only, but against the whole kind of them. And the gracious soul will be groaning, longing, wrestling for the perfect delivery, no truce being to be made here, but the war undertaken for extirpation, Rom. vii. 24. Phil. iii. 13. 14.—Finally, he departs, by growing in grace: Ps. xcii. 12. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” Many go back to their old lusts again, because, though they seem to depart from some sins, yet, being destitute of grace, they cannot grow in the opposite graces, and therefore it fares with them, as in Matth. xii. 44. 45. “Thus their last state is worse than the first.” But as a man is always the farther from his disease, the more that nature is strengthened; so the gracious soul is set the farther from sin, the more that the contrary graces are made to grow in him.—From this part of the subject, we may learn,

1. That

1. That if ye be the Lord's people by sincere dedication, his covenant-people, ye have come away freely from all your lusts, unto himself. You have been at his table, solemnly devoting yourselves to him: if you have dealt honestly with him, and have not eaten and drunk unworthily, your hearts are loosed from all your idols, you have with heart and good-will turned your back on the Sodom of sinful courses, with sincere resolutions not to look back. However little influence this charge has had on others, it is effectual on you; you have taken the alarm, and have begun your march out of the tents of sin, you dare no more be disobedient to the heavenly vision. If so, it is well; if otherwise, you have but mocked God, and wronged your own souls.—You may learn,

2. That if you be indeed the Lord's people by covenant savingly, you will not go back to your former lusts: Luke, ix. 62. "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." You are not to return to your vain conversation. You have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and you cannot go back in point of right; and unless you have been dealing deceitfully with God, you will not go back. Apostacy and backsliding take the mask off hypocrites; and fearful is their condition, for fallen stars were never genuine stars, but stars only in appearance: 1 John, ii. 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Think on this when temptations come, that to return into the tents of sin, is to prove yourselves not to be the Lord's.—We may learn,

Lastly, That if you be the Lord's by election, you shall part with those sins which now part betwixt the Lord Christ and you. For though you hide yourselves from him who came to seek you, he notwithstanding will find you out; and as fast as your lusts hold you, and you them, the Lord will make you fain to cast them as fire out of your bosom, if he has any thoughts of eternal love to you. If he has not, you will get them kept, and you may embrace and hug them during life and through eternity; they shall clasp about you like serpents, stinging with endless despair. But it looks fearfully ill, while the trumpet of the gospel, day after day, and year after year, is sounding an alarm to depart from sin, and others are marching away in your sight, that you are still staying behind.

The life of a saint is a departing from iniquity, and this is their work while here; so that, although it still cleaves unto them, yet they are not sitting down contented in it, but endeavouring the separation for altogether. Thus the charge is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it.—Here there is another

Question, But is it not often seen, that Christians are farther from iniquity at first than ever they are afterwards? hence many complain that their days, after a long standing in religion, are not found to be by far so good as when they were but young Christians.—In answer to this, I observe,

1. That there are not a few who, though never sound converts, yet had awakening grace at their first setting out in a profession, making a mighty reel among their affections, and a great change on their life; which wearing away by degrees, they settled on a lifeless empty form of godliness, and so were farther from iniquity then than ever before.

But

But this will not prove it to be so with the truly godly.—I observe,

2. That Christians of a long standing in religion have their sleeping and decaying times, and young Christians also have theirs. In Song, v. 2. we find the spouse asleep after great manifestations; and in Matth. xxv. 5. we find the wise, as well as the foolish virgins, slumbering and sleeping. And if we compare the sleeping days of aged Christians with the waking days of those who are only young, no doubt the latter has the advantage of the former, even as a working boy is in less danger of the enemy's surprise, than a sleeping man. But since the power of grace effectually stirs up both from their spiritual slumbers, it is but just the comparison pass betwixt them, in the waking frame.—I observe,

3. That there is a difference betwixt the bulk of religion, and the solidity and weight of it; the vehement commotions, and its firmness and rootedness. Young Christians may be of more bulk than the old in respect of many glistering affections, arising from the newness of the thing, which are mixed with it, and afterwards go off. But with old Christians, though there be less bulk, it is more solid and weighty; as the gold, the oftener it is in the fire, is the more refined, though not so bulky. Young Christians have more vehement affections, but the old have them more regular, rooted, and firm; thus the old is better. The longer one stands in Christianity, certainly he has the more experience of the goodness of God, and of the corruption of his own heart, and of the danger from spiritual enemies. Hence he must be more resolute in solid serious dependence upon the Lord for all; more humble, self-denied, and more firm against temptation; and, in one word,

have more of a regular composed tendernefs, with refpect to fin and duty. And herein lies the ftrefs of departing from iniquity: 1 John, v. 3. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.

Young foldiers may rufh upon the enemy with greater brisknefs, but the old ones ftand the ground beft, and abide the fhock more firmly. Wherefore, let not Chriftians of long ftanding in religion be difcouraged as if they were not departing from iniquity, becaufe they do not make fuch vifible progrefs as when religion was new to them, if there remain with them a rooted tendernefs with refpect to any thing that may be difpleafing to God, with a fincere purpofe and endeavour to keep a confcience void of offence towards God and towards man: 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our confcience, that in fimplicity and godly fincerity, not with flefhly wifdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converfation in the world."—Add to this, a ferious longing to be freed from the body of death, Rom. vii. 24. ; and to be perfected in holinefs, Phil. iii. 13. 14. For as the progrefs of the fhip in the main ocean is not fo difcernible as when it was coming off from the fhore, tho' it may move as faft; fo it is no wonder that the progrefs of the Chriftian of long ftanding be not fo vifible as at the firft; or as the growth of a tree the firft year is more difcerned than after, fo it may be with the Chriftian.

Having thus fhewn how far the charge is effectual in this life, we add upon this head,

That it is effectual in all who are the Lord's people, at death; and this in fo far as that then they perfectly depart from fin, and fin from them.

They

They come then to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. There is a great difference betwixt the godly and the wicked in life, and a still greater at death.—As the wicked do in life hold fast their iniquities amidst all the means of justification and sanctification offered them; so at death all these means are removed for ever out of their sight; and thus their iniquities meet upon them, to prey on their souls for ever. Then sin is settled in its full power in their souls as on its own base. No more hopes nor possibility of sanctification; and the several pieces of guilt, as cords of death, are twisted about them for ever. As sin in the godly is in their life loosed at the root, so at their death it is rooted up; as in life they depart from it sincerely, so at death perfectly. The body of death goes with the death of the body, that as death came in by sin, so sin may go out by death. Now, sin is in the godly as the leprosy in the walls of the house, which, therefore, being taken down, the leprosy is removed; when the gracious soul drops the mantle of the body, it will at the same instant drop all the uncleanness cleaving to it. Amen.

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N LIX.

2 TIM. ii. 19. *And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, shown that this charge is effectual with all who are the Lord's, both in this life and at death, we now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To evince the truth of the doctrine, that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God.~ With this view, I would have you to consider the following things.

I. Consider that it was for this purpose that they were elected : Eph. i. 4. " According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love." All whom God has chosen to life, are chosen to holiness ; so that the decree of election in their favour, secures their departure from iniquity. If a person had determined
to

to save a certain number of madmen, going about to kill themselves, with knives in their hands, the resolution to save them would import the taking the knives out of their hands; so here, reprobates may get their lusts kept, but the elect shall not. Wherefore,—as sure as the elect cannot perish, and the Lord will lose none who are his, so sure shall all who are his depart from iniquity. There is no separating of the means and the end, which, in God's decree, are firmly joined together. Life is the end, departing from iniquity the means; therefore, they who are ordained to life shall infallibly depart from it.—As sure as the purpose of God cannot be broken or disappointed, so sure shall they who are his depart from iniquity. It is God's purpose in election, to bring them out of their sin, to everlasting life: Eph. i. 4. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love."

This purpose cannot be broken, for says God, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlv. 10. Therefore, they shall depart from iniquity; and whoever holds it fast are strangers to the grace of God.—Consider, that,

2. It is the end of their redemption by Christ. Why did Christ give himself for these who are his? It was that "he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Why gave he himself for his church? It was, that, "he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word," Eph. v. 26. He came to save them, but from what? From their sins, Math i. 21. Sin had a double hold of those who were his; it held their consciences, by the cords of guilt; and held their heart, will, and affections,

affections, by the interest it had got there. Christ shed his blood, by the efficacy thereof to loose the former, and procured the influences of his Spirit, who, by his indwelling, might loose the latter.

Those for whom Christ did not die will continue in their sins, and perish in them. They are not willing to part with them, and the influences of the Spirit are not procured for them to make them willing. Had Christ been to save sinners in their sins, then those who will not be saved from their sins might have been saved from death. But it is not so. Those for whom Christ died shall infallibly depart from iniquity; and such are all those who are the Lord's: John, x. 15. "I lay down my life for the sheep." Otherwise, the design of Christ's death is frustrated; he died in vain, and all the promises of a seed, made by the Father to his Son, in the covenant, turn to nothing; to imagine which is blasphemous.

Christ bare a good will to those who were his from eternity, and would have them made happy. But they were unholy, therefore he must redeem them from their iniquity, by his blood; otherwise, the gates of the city would have remained closed for ever on them. And now, that the ransom of the blood of the Son of God is paid, is it possible that the prisoners can remain undelivered? Some may be apt to say, O! will ever Christ sanctify such an unholy creature as I am? I will surely perish by the hand of my lusts, and will never get free of them. Why, poor soul, if this be thy exercise, to depart from thy iniquity, it is an evidence thou art his; and it is his honour and interest, to make thee holy, and deliver thee from the dominion and power of thy powerful lusts, in so far as he shed his blood for this end. And, however worthless thou art in thyself,

thyself, thou art dear bought, and therefore must not, canst not, be lost.

3. Consider, that it is the end of their effectual calling. They are called to be saints, Rom. i. 7. The world lies in wickedness. Those who are the Lord's by election, lie among them, till the effectual call come, which brings them out from among them: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17. This call is necessarily connected with election, and it can never be effectual without the soul's being brought to depart from iniquity: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30. The conversion of all the elect, their regeneration, their translation from the power of darkness, are infallible secured, and consequently their departing from iniquity. For what is conversion, but turning from sin unto God? and regeneration, but arising from the death in sin?

4. Consider, that it is the end of all providences. Providence has an eye on all the children of men, but has a special eye on those who are the Lord's people. Favourable dispensations are cords of a man, to draw sinners from their iniquity: Luke, i. 74. 75. "That he would grant us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him, all the days of our life." Afflictive dispensations are scourges, to drive them from their iniquity: Isa. xxvii. 9. "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin:" Heb. xii. 10. "He chasteneth for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." True, they are not effectual on many; mercies do not allure them, judgments

ments do not affright them. But wisdom is justified of her children. And can it be imagined that they shall not be effectual to them?

5. Consider, that it is the end of all ordinances. Wherefore does the Lord send the gospel to sinners, but that they may depart from iniquity? Titus, ii. 11. 12. "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The word is designed for the sanctification of souls: John, xvii. 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." The promises, the threatenings, the doctrines, all lead away from sin. The sacraments of the New Testament are also appointed for this same end. In a word, all gospel-ordinances whatever, Eph. iv. 12. 'They are all "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These will have their effect on those who are his, however they be in vain to others.

Lastly, Consider, that since all who shall be saved shall depart from iniquity, and all who are the Lord's shall be saved, it is evident, that all who are his shall depart from iniquity. Such as continue in their sin can have no communion with God here, much less hereafter, Psal. v. 4.—6. and Psal. xv. throughout. No sooner did the reprobate angels depart from holiness to sin, but God thrust them down to hell, 2 Peter, ii. 4. Adam was driven from the tree of life, on his sinning, Gen. iii. 22. Who then can expect to see the face of God in heaven, without departing from iniquity?—We now come,

III. To make a practical improvement of the whole;—and this,

First,

First, In an use of information.—This subject informs us,

1. Whence the success of the Gospel is derived. We see it has its effect on some, in turning them from their sins unto God, while others, having the same means of grace, are untouched by them. Trace this to the spring-head, and it must be ascribed, neither to the free-will of the party, the piety or parts of the preacher, but to the eternal love of God terminating on some. There is a time of loves set in the counsel of God, respecting all the elect; and when this time comes, they shall infallibly answer the call.—We may see,

2. That the unsuccessfulness of the gospel, barrenness and impenitency under the means of grace, are matters which draw very deep. Men think little of disobeying God's charge, sounded continually in their ears, by the gospel; think little of going on in sins, from which they are charged to part; but did they consider that the charge must be infallibly complied with, by all who are the Lord's, their own sitting of it would be a terror to themselves. For, in so far as they comply not with it, so far they shew themselves not to belong to God. Where God has much people, the gospel will have much success.—We may learn,

3. That iniquity is that abominable thing which God hates. It is the greatest of all evils, and therefore, as it is that thing which God sets himself particularly against, so we in a special manner should set ourselves against it. Poverty, meanness, and contempt in the world, God suffers in those who are dear to him; but he will not suffer sin to have dominion over them, and at length will quite expel it from those who are his. He will not bear with it in his own, as he hates it for itself.—We are informed,

4. That there is a divine power comes along with the charge, to all who are the Lord's people, when once the time of love is come. This is that which makes them depart, while others hold fast their iniquity: Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The elect of God are as much dead in trespasses and sins as others are; sin has the same dominion over them as over others. But with the word the Spirit enters into them, and brings them away from the tents of sin, causes them to rise up out of their graves, while others lie still in them.—We may learn,

Lastly, That departing from iniquity is absolutely necessary to evince that we belong to God, because all such do depart from iniquity. It is the fruit of election and conversion; and so the great evidence of interest in God's eternal love, and his present favour.—For understanding this, three things are to be noticed.

(1.) That a person's being in his sin, still under the dominion of it, unsanctified, unholy, is a certain evidence of his being in a state of enmity with God, in a state of wrath, and that he does not actually belong to God, but to Satan. One may pretend faith in Christ, and a covenant-interest in God, while he is going on in a course of sin. But his pretences are vain, his works disprove his faith, his unholy life discovers his graceless state: James, ii. 17. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

(2.) That a person's being still in his sin, under its dominion, will not, while he lives, prove him to be none of God's elect, excepting only in the case of the unpardonable sin, which is most rare. The reason is, that the charge is effectual in all the elect, yet it may be long in taking its effect on some,

some, as in the case of the thief on the cross. So that while there is life, there is hope. This I note, to baffle that temptation, with which Satan attacks some, namely, That they are not elected, and therefore they need not set their minds towards religion, for it will not do with them. This is bare-faced reasoning from hell; for be your case never so hopeless, though ye be quite graceless, and this never so long continued in, while you do not obstinately, and altogether maliciously, reject salvation by Christ, it cannot prove you to be none of God's elect; for at the eleventh hour you may be called. Yet,

(3.) Without departing from iniquity, no person can certainly know he is elected, or that he belongs to God. By this, indeed, a person may know it, 2 Peter, i. 10. : but without it, no man can; for God does not allow us, nor can we at first hand go and read our names in the book of life. We must learn it by sanctification, which is the fruit of election, by which we come to know both our election and our effectual calling.—We may improve the subject,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby you may try whether you be the Lord's covenanted people or not. This may be known by your departing from iniquity, or your not departing. Here, to assist you, we shall mention the two following marks.

Mark 1. If you are departing from iniquity, there will be a sincere endeavour after universal obedience, Psal. cxix. 6.; aiming to please God in all things, and not indulging yourself in any known sin, being content to know, in all cases, what is sin and what is duty. The truly godly will set themselves against the first motions of sin, Rom. vii. 7.; against secret sins, Ps. xix. 12.; even against

that sin which most easily besets them, Psal. xviii. 23.; and will witness against self, in its various shapes, Matth. v. 3.

Mark 2. If you are departing from iniquity, you will be wearying and groaning under the remains of sin, Rom. vii. 26. However much the hypocrite may content himself with as much grace as seems necessary to secure heaven to him, yet the godly man is going on, and pressing forwards towards perfection, though he cannot reach it; and looks on the remains of sin as iron fetters, which he would fain be quit of, that he may be holy, as God is holy; and perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect.—We may improve the subject,

Lastly, In an use of exhortation.

We beseech you, O sinners! to depart from iniquity. You have dwelt too long in the tents of sin. You are called now to arise and depart from all your sins, freely to part with them, never to return to them, but to be still departing farther and farther from them. The exhortation concerns both saints and sinners.

There are three motives, which the text affords us to prevail with sinners in drawing them from their sins. These are,—the evil of sin,—the necessary connection betwixt a person's departing from it and their belonging to God, and—the obligation lying on sinners to part with it, from their naming the name of Christ. We shall consider these separately, as in their nature important and weighty; and O that we could improve them, so as to draw you all from your sins!—We begin with,

Mot. 1. Sin is an evil, a great evil, from which you are called to depart. Sinners are deceived with an appearance of goodness, of profit, or of pleasure in their sins. But, God knows, it is the worst

worst of evils ; and therefore from it by all means God will have his own to depart. O that I could draw the monstrous evil in its own colours, to bring you all from it to holiness ! Could you get a genuine sight of it, you would run from it as from a fire ; as from hell-fire : Rom. xii. 9. “ Abhor that which is evil.” Sin is the greatest evil. This will appear, if the following things are attended to.—Sin is an evil,

1. In the eyes of God : Jer. xlv. 4. “ Oh ! do not this abominable thing that I hate.” God, who knows all things, and cannot be deceived with fair appearances, looks on this, which men naturally set their hearts on, as the worst of ills. O ! shall we not think of it as God does ?—Consider,

(1.) It is the only thing which he condemns, and he every where condemns it in his word. The world cries out on many things which are not sin, but God on nothing else. Many would persuade themselves, that God looks on their sins as they do. But this he takes as an affront to his holiness : Psal. l. 21. “ These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself : but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.” Look to his word, which is the indication of his mind ; and there you will see, he never speaks good of sin.

(2.) It is the only thing which he pursues with his wrath, and he does this wherever it is found. It is the enemy he pursues through the whole creation, wherever it appears. It entered in among the angels, and fixed itself in the reprobate ones ; wrath immediately pursued it, and tumbled them down to the pit : “ God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgement,” 2 Peter, ii. 4. It got place with

mankind in paradise ; and wrath was at his heels there ; Adam's prosperous state was quickly turned into misery. The very ground on which the sinner treads, is cursed for its sake. The sinner, in his sinful state, is in a state of wrath. It abides on him, John, iii. 36. The sky never clears on him, while he is a sinner. Even with his own children, God writes his indignation on it : John, xlii. 24. " Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned ? " The earth is made to groan under it ; and when the end comes, the defiled creation has to go through the fire to purge it. But above all, see how he pursued sin in his own Son, though it was only on him by imputation : Rom. viii. 32. " He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. " The sins of the elect met on him, and therefore the sorrows of wrath met in him, and left him not, till they brought him to the dust of death.

(3.) Departing from it is the only testimony of his creatures love to him which he requires, and nothing less can be accepted. He does not seek rivers of oil, nor other costly sacrifices : " But he hath shewed thee, O man ! what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? " If he call them to lay down their lives for him, it is only in the way of their standing off from sin ; otherwise it is not acceptable, nor required. But his law is, Suffer any thing rather than sin. Behold it in one word, " Ye that love the Lord, hate evil, " Psal. xcvi. 10.

2. Sin is an evil, and a great evil, in the eyes of the truly godly. Whenever the eyes of any person are opened by grace, then immediately they are of this mind ; while the rest of the deluded world hug the serpent in their bosom, they are for flying

lying from it at any rate. If they lose this opinion of it at any time, it is owing to the loss of their light, their falling asleep. But, in their settled judgement, it is the worst of evils.—For,

(1.) Of all evils it has lain nearest their hearts, and produced the heaviest complaints and groans. Psal. li. 3. Lam. xvi. 17. Hear Paul's complaint: Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Did ever persecutions, prisons, reproaches, or all the ills he suffered, draw such a complaint from him? In tribulations he rejoiced, in a prison he sang; but in the fetters of the body of death, he groans like a dying man.

(2.) Sin or suffer being put to their choice, they have always, when themselves, chused to suffer rather than sin: Acts, xx. 24. "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." It is true, a godly man may sometimes be bemisted, so as not to see a thing to be sin which is sin; nay sometimes, in a hurry of temptation to avoid suffering, he may fall into sin against light; but otherwise, by divine grace, they will chuse poverty, imprisonment, banishment, death, rather than sin; even the greatest temporal evil, rather than the least sin. Thus the cloud of witnesses gave their testimony. From these they did not "accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," Heb. xi. 35.

3. Sin is indeed in its own nature and properties the greatest of all evils. —To make this evident, consider,

(1.) That of all things sin is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the chief good, and therefore

therefore it is the chief evil, Lev. xxvi. It is walking contrary to God ; it is worse than all penal evils ; these met in Jesus Christ, who was God as well as man, but sin was not found in him : Heb. vii. 26. " For such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." God owns himself the author of penal evils, but it is blasphemy to father sin upon him. This fights against God ; and, as one says, the sinner, so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God, dethrones him, and strikes at his very being. God, swearing by his holiness, swears by himself ; but nothing is so opposite to holiness as sin is, nothing can be more or as much so ; nay, it is the very thing which makes the devil evil, and therefore it is more evil itself than even the devil.—Consider,

(2.) That sin is most contrary to the rational nature. Right reason condemns it ; and no reason approves it, but as blinded and prejudiced. It degrades men, and makes them like beasts, the filthiest of beasts, dogs and swine, 2 Pet. ii. 22. ; more beastly than the beasts themselves : Isa. i. 3. " The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Thus the wicked man is a vile man, though never so honourable, Ps. xv. 4. Hence it is, that although there are some who glory in their shame, yet sin is such a work of darkness, that no person ordinarily is disposed to father the monstrous brat.—Consider,

(3.) That sin is the deformity of the soul. That is the seat of sin, which is the noblest part of man. But it is the deformity of that part ; and the corruption of what is the best is certainly the worst evil. Even a deformity in the face is worse than in another part ; a bloody man on a throne is worse than such a person.

person on a dunghill. Thus the ill of sin appears in what it does to the soul; it defaces God's image there, and so mars its beauty: Psal. xiv. 3. "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no, not one." No running sore, canker, or gangrene, is comparable to it, for these do but prey on the body, sin on the soul. It makes men unlike God, and like the devil. God is holy, just, and good; the devil is unholy and wicked; and so is the sinner going on in his sin. It makes a person like the devil, as a child is to his father, John, viii. 44. therefore both go to one place in the end: Matth. xxv. 41. "Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—Consider,

(4.) That sin is a hereditary evil, and these are the worst of evils, the hardest to be cured. We were born with it: Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is woven into our very natures, it cannot be taken away without a miracle of grace; even such a power is necessary as is required in raising the dead, and quickening them. The whole man must be born again, new moulded, new framed, ere the person can depart from iniquity.—Consider,

(5.) That sin is the mother of all those evils which ever were, are, or shall be; the teeming womb of all mischief. What cast the angels out of heaven, Adam out of paradise? What deluged the old world, and burned Sodom? It was sin. Of all the evils on soul and body to which man is liable, sin leads the van. Behold how death, in numberless shapes, has overflowed the world! What a flood of miseries is overflowing mankind, kingdoms,

kingdoms, churches, families, persons, souls, bodies ! What has opened the sluice of these ? Rom. v. 12. affords the answer, " Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." There is never a sigh, nor a groan in this world, under any hardship whatsoever, but it rises from the sting of this serpent ; and it has filled hell with groans which will last for ever.—Consider,

(6.) That where sin is removed in its guilt and power, the greatest evils cannot harm us : 2 Pet. iii. 13. " And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ?" Diseases, crosses, death itself, without it, is like a serpent without a sting, 1 Cor. xv. 55. 56. The severe lashes of the just Judge of heaven and earth, are turned into the rods of a loving father, Psal. lxxxix. 31. 32. Death is but the falling asleep, and dying only the shadow of death. Nay, they shall do us good : Rom. viii. 28. " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Out of the most dark, troubled, and confounding case, God will raise a beautiful frame. Every stone cast at them shall be a precious stone, sanctified for their good.—Consider,

(7.) That wherever sin is in force, it not only strengthens other evils, but blasts and poisons all that good which a person enjoys. It not only arms diseases, death, and hell, against a man, but turns his very blessings into curses : Mal. ii. 2. " If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings ; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." In all the enjoyments

joyments and comforts of a sinner out of Christ, there is death in the pot. One man's crosses ruin him, another man's prosperity ensnares him, and proves his ruin, Prov. xxx. 8. 9. Nay, the very means of grace are a savour of death unto death unto some, 2 Cor. ii. 16. What is the reason why sin poisons the fountain? Thus, be the waters sweet or bitter, they are killing.—Consider,

(8.) That sin is the most painful and tormenting evil, when once the pain of it is raised, and the poison begins sensibly to operate: Prov. xviii.

14. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?" It is true, that it is so long in working with some, that it may never thus work till in hell they lift up their eyes; but O how dreadful must it then be! Conscience is a tender part; and this, sin torments. What torment was Cain in, when his conscience got upon him! It made Felix tremble, Belshazzar's knees to smite one against another; it involved Judas in utter despair, so as to make away with himself. See Job, xx. 12.—16.—Consider,

(9.) That sin is a most deadly evil: Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." It brought temporal death into the world; and the body of man, which by its creation was not liable to death, it made mortal. But more than this, it is the cause of spiritual death. It kills the soul, separating it from God and communion with him, and makes many a man dead while he lives, so that his living body is but a coffin to a dead soul, Ephes. ii. 1. And, finally, it brings on eternal death.—Consider,

(10.) That sin is a most infectious evil. No plague nor pestilence so dangerous. Many persons, in times of a raging plague, have been preserved. But as for the plague of sin, when once it seized Eve, she infected Adam, and he all his posterity.

posterity. And now the world is a pest-house, where not one is quite free. Some are under the cure of grace, and in the way of recovery; but the most part are pining away in their iniquity, and every one of them infecting another more and more: Eccles. ix. 18. "One sinner destroys much good." This one sinner may have the blood of many at his door, whom he has ruined by his advice, carelessness, and evil example.—Consider,

(.11) That the giving up of a sinner to sin, is the concluding stroke which God gives him, so that it is the worst thing a person can meet with. Here I would have you more particularly to consider,—that when God in wrath gives a man over in this life, he leaves him, and gives him up to his sin. God deals with sinners to part with their sins, they will not; God's offers are slighted, then, as in Psal. lxxxi. 12. "He gives them up to their own hearts lust; and they walk in their own counsels." He is at much pains with them by providences and ordinances, but nothing does with them; then in anger he gives them over: Ezek. xxiv. 13. "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest on thee." Thus, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," Hosea, iv. 17. Of the heathen world it is said, "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections," Rom. i. 26. We read of one who was given up to the devil, that he was again recovered. But where find ye a man given up to himself, to his lusts, reclaimed? Wherefore better be given up to the devil, than to sin. Fearful sentence! "Let him that is filthy be filthy still."—Consider, when at death the impenitent sinner is carried out of the world
into

into the pit, there is no more endeavours to separate betwixt him and his sin. In life he would depart from God, and so his doom is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Then his sins are left to prey upon his soul for ever; no more pardon, no more sanctification: Prov. xiv. 32. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." God strives with the man in life to part him and his sins, but he will not part from them; so the whirlwind of death rises, and carries both away together to the pit.—Consider,

(12.) When God has brought in all his elect to himself, and the last man of them has left the tents of sin, then shall the world be at an end. The sheep shall be separate from the goats, the sinners driven away in their wickedness to hell; this world defiled by sin shall be burnt up; and they, and sin, with all its effects, shut up in hell for ever, Rev. xx. 14. 15. Then shall there be new heavens and a new earth, but no sin there, 2 Peter, iii. 13. It shall be settled in hell for ever, as on its own base.—Sin must be an evil, a great evil: For,

4. If you will continue in sin, of all things Satan loves most to have it so. It gratifies the enemy of mankind most; and this in two things, on which he is most particularly set.

(1.) The dishonour of God. Satan is a rebel against God, who has not the smallest hopes of peace, and is utterly desperate, therefore rages and maliciously sets himself against God, sinning against God himself, and tempting men to sin and continue in it, that he may have the satisfaction of their dishonouring God, and despising his Son; thus grieving his Spirit, and trampling on his laws.—Satan is set upon,

(2.) The ruin of souls: 1 Peter, v. 8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil,"

devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. He loves to keep them in subjection to himself, that he may reign freely in their hearts, which will be as long as they are under the dominion of sin; and to have them companions with him in eternal misery; which he is sure to accomplish if he can keep them in their sins.—I come now to

Mot. 2. To prevail with you in departing from iniquity, observe this is necessary from your belonging to God, your departing from sin. Whoso are his, infallibly do depart from iniquity, whatever others do. This has been proved before.—Now, upon this consider,—The weight that lies here, whether a person belongs to God or not. You need to have this cleared, whose you are, whether the Lord's people or not.—For consider,

(1.) Your state for time turns upon this point. All the world is divided into two parties; one belonging to God by covenant and dedication, Heb. viii. 10.; another to Satan, the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. See them distinguished, 1 John, v. 19. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The one is the family of heaven, the other Satan's family. If you belong to the former, you are justified, adopted, all is yours, and ye are Christ's. If to the latter, ye are in a state of wrath and enmity against God.—Consider,

(2.) Your state for eternity turns upon this point. If ye be the Lord's, ye shall be for ever happy with him. Your names will be found written in the book of life. If not, your names will not be found there; and see the doom of such: Rev. xx. 15. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." You shall infallibly evidence, by your departing from

from iniquity, that you are the Lord's, Rev. xiv. 1.—5. Sanctification is an infallible proof of election and justification, and an infallible pledge of glorification. It is a middle link of the indissoluble chain which begins with election and ends with glorification, Rom. viii. 29. 30. Thes. ii. 13. The spirit of holiness is God's seal upon them that are his, by which they come to be owned and discerned to be his: Eph. i. 13. "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." But as long as you depart not from sin, it is a positive evidence that you belong not to God by accepting of the covenant, Jerem. xxxii. 30. Your cleaving to sin is an evidence you are not united to Christ, and you can have no positive concluding evidence that you belong to God by election. It is but at best a peradventure it may be. And as always the longer that a person continues in sin, there are the less hopes of his recovery, so there is the less probability of his belonging to the election of grace. And if you die in your sin, it will be beyond dispute, that you do not belong to God at all.

Depart, then, from iniquity, as ever you would have any concern for shewing yourselves to be the Lord's. Upon this let me ask you, Is it a matter of indifference to you whether you be the Lord's or not? Truly this is the language of souls careless about their salvation, and particularly about their sanctification. It is declared to you, that all who are the Lord's depart from iniquity. Yet you are careless about your departing from it. This speaks your indifference.—I would further ask you, Can you ever be happy if you be not the Lord's? How can you live without his favour, living on his ground, and at his cost? Acts, xvii. 25. "He giveth to all, life and breath, and all

things." How can you think to look the king of terrors in the face, without the favour of the King of heaven, which you can never have, while you do not depart from iniquity? Rom. i. 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."—I would ask you, *lastly*, Is it not a miserable office against your own souls, to dispute away any saving relation betwixt God and you? Every new disobedience to this heavenly charge, is a new argument against yourselves, that you are not his. This charge in the gospel is addressed to all to whom the gospel comes; it is like a fanning wind separating the wheat from the chaff. By it the grace of God brings away the elect out of the tents of sin, leaving others to perish there. What a dismal thought, then, is it to be left, time after time, in iniquity!—I come now to urge the

3. And last motive, *which* is, that obligation which is lying on those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. The Christian profession obliges all who make it to be holy, and to walk as Christians.—And here I would consider,

1st, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are.

2^{dly}, The obligation which specially lies on communicants.—I would consider,

1st, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are.—Here consider,

1. That your baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, by which you were taken engaged to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to obey the Lord Jesus, Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. This
is

is a seal of God's covenant, to which you have thereby consented. And since you bear the badge of Christianity, you ought to live Christian and holy lives. And God will treat you as covenant-breakers if you do not.—Consider,

2. The author of your profession, from whom you take your name: Acts, xi. 26. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." From Christ we are called Christians. And pity it is that ever those who profess Christ should be called by the names of sinful or wicked men. You know those who are named for men, are so named, because they are followers of them. And so the name Christian signifies a follower of Christ, one who follows that way which Christ taught. Now, consider him, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession Jesus Christ, Heb. iii. 1. What was the author of your profession? He was holy, Heb. vii. 26. His name is a name of holiness: Anointed of God, for a Prophet, Priest, and King. A Christian indeed partakes of the anointing of the Holy Spirit: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," 1 John, ii. 20. They are made kings and priests unto God and his Father, Rev. i. 6. Now, how does a sinful life agree with the holy name, example, and doctrine of Christ?—Consider,

3. The faith and religion you profess. Surely the principles of our religion are holy, and teach us to depart from iniquity, and give no allowance to live in sin. Even reason says, men ought not to live, nor can they rationally live, in contradiction to their profession and its principles. Other religions allow something sinful, but the Christian religion, proceeding from him who is holiness and truth itself, condemns every even the least evil; and therefore Christians by their pro-

feſſion are obliged to depart from iniquity.—Conſider,

Laſtly, The end of your faith and profeſſion, the way to which it directs, namely, heaven, which is a holy place. The goſpel has diſcovered life and immortality, 2 Tim. i. 10. A happy ſtate after this life, where holineſs is perfected, Heb. xii. 23. And meanwhile it directs to a life agreeable to this holy and happy ſtate; for it “teaches to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world,” Titus, ii. 12. Have you no hopes, no expectations of heaven? If you have, ſurely you ought to depart from iniquity; for it cannot be expected that that holy place is for dogs and ſwine, for ſuch as are ſtrangers to holineſs here.

2dly, I would conſider the obligations to depart from iniquity which lie on communicants in a ſpecial manner. You have in a very ſolemn manner named the holy name of Jeſus, by partaking of the ſacrament of our Lord’s body and blood. Let this then engage you to depart from iniquity.—Conſider,

1. That theſe additional vows of God are upon you to depart from iniquity. You have lifted up your hand to God, and you cannot go back. The terms of the Chriſtian life were told you, and you have, after deliberation, engaged yourſelves to the Lord. Beware that after vows you begin to make inquiry, Luke, ix. 62.—Conſider,

2. That religion will be wounded by you if you do not depart from iniquity: Rom. ii. 24. “For the name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles through you.” You will be accounted betray-ers of Chriſt, for you will give falſe teſtimony againſt his way in favour of ſin, as if you had tried the way of religion, and after trial found cauſe to caſt

cast it off. And therefore, as you would not more than ever dishonour the Lord and his way, depart from iniquity.—Consider,

3. That you will be great losers if you do not depart from iniquity. You will lose all the pains which you have been at in religion: 2 John, 8. “Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought.” It may be, you have been at some pains to get something, and have done much in the way of God, but one thing lacking will mar all. You will lose your souls, for it is only they who depart from iniquity, so as never to return to it, that are saved: “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Backsliding is most dangerous: Heb. x. 38. “If any man draw back, my soul,” says God, “shall have no pleasure in him.” The very setting off once in the Lord’s way obliges to hold forward. They can never sin at such a cheap rate as before; heavier vengeance abides backsliders, and a fall from heaven’s threshold is worst of all.

Now, the Lord is saying to the sinners in Zion, as Jerem. vi. 8. “Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem! lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.” He is threatening to depart from the generation, since they will not depart from iniquity; and sad will the departure be: Hosea, ix. 12. “Woe also be to them when I depart from them.”—There are three sad consequents of God’s departure when provoked to it, with which we are threatened this day.—There is,

(1.) Confusion in the church, the breaking of the staves of beauty and bands. There is a melancholy account of this consequence of the Lord’s departure, Rev. viii. 7. 8. We have already felt the former, and were threatened with the Lord’s making, in his wrath, the whole mountain of his house,

house, a burning mountain with the fire of division. A sad sight it will be, come when it will, however fond of it many have appeared. Zion's work will be heavy work, when Zion's builders are by the Lord's anger made like Babel builders.—There is,

(2.) Calamity in the state. Many perhaps would little value what should become of the church, if they might otherwise live at ease. But God's departure from a generation, often brings nations into the deepest perplexity and distress, 2 Chron. xv. 3.—6. When God departs from a generation, to see what their end will be, it will be a sad end, Deut xxxii. 19. 20.—There is,

(3.) The ruin of many souls and bodies also. When God so leaves a generation, there are many snares for the soul. Confusion in the church brings deadness and darkness on, and makes havoc of the case of many souls. Calamity in the state, which removes peace far away, tends always to the ruining of temporal concerns, and often of mens souls concerns also.

O then depart from iniquity, as ever you would that God should not depart from you, nor from the generation! Our iniquities are the Achans in the camp which trouble us; the Jonah in our ship which threatens to raise the storm. God has been long calling by his word and providence to us to depart from iniquity, and reform. But instead of this, the generation has been filling up the cup of their iniquity, and want but some one thing or other to make it run over. But whatever befall us, departing from sin will be your security: Isa. iii. 10. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." God's way is the only way

way of safety : Prov. x. 9. "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." And a good conscience will be a feast in midst of trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12. Whereas an evil conscience, made such by continuing in sin, will be a bad companion at any time, more especially in the evil day.—If any should propose this

Question, What shall we do that we may depart from iniquity? I answer, Impress your spirits with your own sinfulness. Consider your sinful nature, Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Observe how it spreads itself through the whole of your hearts and lives : Isa. lxiv. 6. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the whirlwind have taken us away." How contrary is it to God's nature and law, how inconsistent with your interests for time and eternity! Make application to Christ by faith for its removal. To his blood to remove the guilt of sin, 1 John, i. 7. To his Spirit to break the power of it, and to sanctify you. Faith is the great mean of sanctification: "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts, xv. 9.—We exhort you,

Lastly, To watch. Be ever on your watch-tower. Your spiritual enemies are still about your hands. Watch therefore against all occasions, temptations, and appearances of evil. Improve the season of duties. Study to be always doing good, and so your hand will be filled with other work. When departing from evil, you will do good, you will seek peace, and pursue it earnestly. Amen.

THE INWARD FRAME SHOULD COR-
RESPOND WITH THE OUTWARD
PROFESSION *.

SERMON LX.

DEUT. v. 29. *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.*

THAT dreadful appearance which God made on mount Sinai, in the giving of the law, and that effect it had upon the Israelites, Moses here puts them in mind of. When the Lord spoke with a great and terrible voice out of the darkness and fire, the people were affrighted, and they see their absolute need of a mediator, and therefore desire Moses would mediate betwixt God and them; and in this event they promise all obedience. The Lord gives his verdict concerning this, which consists of two parts.

1. That the words were very good. If words could

* This and the following discourses were delivered in 1709.

could have proved them faints, they would have been among the foremost. If promises could have passed for performances, they had wanted neither faith nor good works: Ver. 28. "They have well said all that they have spoken." They have said two things:

(1.) They had desired a mediator, ver. 27: "Go thou near," said they to Moses, "and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." They saw so much of the majesty of God, and of their own sinfulness, that they beg of God he would not deal with them immediately, but by a mediator; and this was the great end in giving the law on mount Sinai, and that with so much terror, Deut. xviii. 15.—18.

(2.) They promise obedience, that they would take the law out of Moses mouth, and perform it; that they would no less highly esteem it as coming by his hand, than if God should thunder it with the greatest terror into their ears. What could look liker faith and obedience, according to the Old-Testament dispensation? What could look liker accepting of the great Mediator in all his offices, according to that dispensation of the covenant, wherein types and figures of him who was to come did so much abound? How ready seem they to sit down at the feet of a prophet and learn. So that upon this the Lord promised Christ under that very notion, Deut. xviii. 18.

How plainly do they take with guilt, and stand as criminals who have nothing to say on their own defence, acknowledge their need, and profess their desire of an intercessor, being unable to stand before the Lord without a shelter, or on their own legs. How readily do they subject themselves to the

THE INWARD FRAME SHOULD CORRESPOND

laws of their King, and stoop to take on his yoke without any exception whatsoever? But all is not gold that glitters, the heart of man seldom holds foot with the tongue.

2. The other part of the verdict follows in the text: "O that there were such an heart in them!" By which he discovers their hypocrisy, and precipitancy, their tongues running before their hearts in their engaging themselves to the Lord. The Lord speaks thus after the manner of men, so that they who would hence conclude, that man's will by nature is such, as that it is of himself flexible, either to spiritual good or evil, while the Lord stands by as an idle spectator, and puts to no hand of power, may as well conclude, that God hath eyes and hands of flesh, and that he who is not the son of man that he should repent, and with whom there is no variableness, may even with propriety repent as to what he has done. Inefficacious wishing, properly understood, argues imperfection. (Hebrew, who will give their heart to be such in them?) Now, it is certain, God can give such a heart: Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart also will I give you." And if he will do it, who can hinder him? Job, xi. 10.—This declaration therefore imports,

(1.) That such an heart was not in them, for all their fair words and high pretences; that though they looked well outwardly, yet within they were naught. They had learned to speak better than they were wont; but though they had got the new tongue, they had but the old heart still: Deut. xxix. 4. "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." When they were in Egypt, they were sunk into stupidity, the instructions of the patriarchs had worn out of their minds, they had almost forgotten their fall in Adam,

Adam, and what sin was; and though God had made the promise to Abraham, yet they were now grown proud and secure. And though sin, and also death, were reigning over them, yet being without the law to evidence sin and death to their consciences, they would not charge themselves with it, and so found no need of a Mediator, Rom. v. 13.—20. But now the law being proclaimed with so great terror, laid their peacock-feathers a little; but though they had more knowledge of their sin and misery than before, yet they had still the old heart.—This declaration imports,

(2.) That such an heart should have been in them, it was their duty to have it, God required it of them: "Make to yourselves a new heart." God requires the conformity of the heart, as well as of the conversation, to his will.—It imports,

(3.) That the want of such an heart was a dead fly in all their engagements, which made all the ointment to stink: "O that there were such an heart in them!" The chief thing is wanting still, they have not yet brought up their heart to their work.—It imports,

(4.) The great excellency and worth of such an heart. The Lord speaks honourably of it, as that which would bear weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It is pleasing to the Lord, it is God's delight; they want only this to make them happy.—For illustrating this subject, we shall propose and consider the following DOCTRINES.

DOCT. I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

DOCT. II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding

responding with the profession of a covenanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

DOCT. III. That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart-work. Or, in other words, Solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart-work.

WE begin with

DOCTRINE I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

NEVER was there a more solemn transaction which men had with God than what was here. Their ears were filled with the noise of the thunder, the lightnings flashed in their eyes, they heard God himself speak, they were most express in covenanting with God; all this time their hearts were not right with him, nor sound in his statutes.—In discoursing from this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engaging himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling.

II. Shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business doth appear.

III. Point out how people come to turn such solemn work into mere trifling.

IV. Apply the subject.

WE are, then,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engaging himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling.—Upon this head we observe,

1. That

1. That a person may formally and expressly covenant with God, to be the Lord's, and yet after all be but trifling with God. So did this people, ver. 27. (quoted above). A person may make a covenant with God, both by word and writ, when there is no such heart in him, and the heart goes not along either with tongue or pen. It is an easy thing to say unto the Lord, that he shall be our God, but not easy to say it with the heart. The tongue is not always a faithful interpreter of the heart, especially in these things.—We observe,

2. That a person may make a very full covenant with the Lord, and yet after all be but trifling. What exception was there in this, ver. 27. "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, we will hear it and do it." How large a promise was this, Matth. viii. 19. "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." No doubt, had their hearts kept pace with their words, they had engaged to purpose. Had there been as few secret as there were open reserves, they had dealt honestly.—We observe,

3. That persons may even be morally serious in all this, thinking and resolving in the time to do as they say. It was not a season for gross dissimulation, nor to make a jest of transacting with the Lord anent soul-concerns, when the Lord was speaking out of the darkness and fire to them. Persons in this case are like those who trifle with merchants, in offering to bargain for their wares, out of mere simplicity and ignorance as to the worth of these wares, who, if they had matters set in their due light, would never once propose again so to bid for them. The foolish virgins saw not their lamps out till it was past time.—We observe,

4. That persons may do all this from a sense of
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their need of a Mediator. Thus did they in the text. What was it that brought this people to this? Why, they had formerly engaged with a whole heart to be the Lord's: Exod. xix. 8. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." But now they fall more solemnly and seriously to work. God sets the mountain on fire for a tribunal of justice; there is a trumpet whose voice waxes louder and louder; by all which God doth as it were summon them to compear before him. There are dreadful thunder-claps to carry the sentence of death to their hearts; there are lightnings, by the glancings of which they read the wrath of God against sinners. Yet they must not touch the mountain, lest they be consumed, to teach them how sin had laid the bar as to access to God. This fills them with terror and fear of death, and now they feel the necessity of a mediator: Exod. xx. 19. "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And yet, after all, "O that there were such an heart in them!"

WE are now,

II. To shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business does appear.

I. It appears in persons engaging themselves to the Lord, without being at pains to prepare themselves, and bring up their hearts to the duty. O what a light thing do most people make of covenanting with God! It is but the saying of a word in prayer; and this is soon said. It is but taking the sacrament; and this is soon done. In the mean time, the heart, like Abraham's ass, is left at the foot of the hill: Gen. xxii. 5. Mat. xv. 8. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,

mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." They are strangers to God who are strangers to heart-work. They who find no difficulty in bringing their hearts to duties, do not bring them to them at all. The true Christian finds much difficulty in this. I find, says Paul, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. It is but trifling to give the hand to the Lord, while the heart is far from any due concern about the business, and from that solemn seriousness requisite to get it rightly managed.—This appears,

(2.) When people engage themselves to the service of the Lord, but do not give their hearts to him. Many engage with the Lord, as a married servant with a master; the master is to get his service, but another has his heart: Jer. xii. 2. "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." The heart may remain glued to lusts, while the soul pretends to be engaging itself to the Lord; and if it were not so, there would not be such a sad account of many who covenant with God. This is but to trifle with God, who requires the heart, or nothing: Prov. xxiii. 26. "My son, give me thine heart." Jer. xxx. 21. "For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord." It is an ill-made second marriage, when there is neither the death of, nor a divorce from the first husband. There is no right engaging with the Lord, but where the soul forsakes all others for him, and the heart takes up its eternal rest in Christ.—This trifling appears,

(3.) When people have any secret reserves in their closing with Christ, as is the case when the heart is not well content to take Christ with whatsoever may follow this choice: Luke, xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father,

and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." There is none make right work here, but those who, weighing all things, are content to put a blank in Christ's hand; saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts, ix. 6. They do but trifle, who have their right-hand fins which they wish not cut off, for they will in this case mar the bargain; and also those who cannot digest that tribulation which is in the way to the kingdom. No cross, no crown. That heart which is not reconciled to the cross, is not such an heart as is required.—This trifling appears,

(4.) When people overlook the Mediator in their covenant of peace with God, but transact with God for peace and pardon without respect to the atoning blood of Christ. It is natural to all men to come immediately to God without a Mediator: Exod. xix. 8. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." They are thus for coming without a Mediator, till the terror of God correct their rashness, and they see what a consuming fire God is, and that, if they would be safe, they must come to him under the covert of Christ's wings. If a soul sincerely desires to come to God, the first person to which they must go, is to Christ, the secretary of heaven. For "by him we have access into that grace wherein we stand," Rom. v. 2. And he is "the Mediator of the new covenant." Heb. xii. 24. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. But there are beasts that will touch the mountain, though they be thrust through with a dart. Would you transact with God a covenant of reconciliation? then go to him on the mercy-seat; not the seat of mercy merely for mercy's sake, such

such a mercy-seat has no being in heaven, but only in the vain imaginations of men on earth; but to the mercy-seat for Christ's sake, where mercy is abundantly distributed with the cordial consent of justice: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is to God as veiled with flesh, that the guilty can only approach; otherwise it is but trifling. For Jesus is "the way, and no man cometh to the Father but by him," John, xiv. 6.

5. This is turned into solemn trifling with God, by people's not taking Christ for all, but only for making up that which they may come short; thus endeavouring to patch up a garment of their own righteousness and of his together. Thus many think to please God, by doing what they can to fulfil the law, and looking to Christ to make up that of which they come short. It was forbidden under the law, to wear a garment of divers sorts of woolen and linen together. And they will find themselves befooled, who will adventure their salvation on this party-coloured garment: Gal. iii. 12. "And the law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them." A garment pieced up of sundry sorts of righteousness, is not meet for the court of heaven. That heart which would share the glory betwixt Christ and the man himself, is not right with God, and will be left to its own weight.—This trifling appears,

6. By persons making a covenant of works with Christ; the tenor whereof is, that if Christ will save their souls, they shall serve him as long as they live. If Christ will give them wages, they will give him work. If he will pay their debt, they shall be his servants, while they have breath in them. And upon this, men may take the sacrament

crament to bind them the faster. And thus, I fear, many make sad work at sacraments and other ordinances. That this is but solemn trifling with God, appears, if ye consider, that this is a covenant which hath no warrant in the word of God, and therefore Christ will never set his seal to it, though we should seal it with our blood. It is quite opposite to the covenant of grace; the design of which is to draw the sinner into the debt of free grace, and to set the crown only on Christ's head, Rom. iv. 14.—16 and xi. 6. The covenant of grace, is an everlasting covenant; once in, never out: Isa. lv. 3. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." But this is a tottering covenant, broken every day. This is a servile covenant, to give Christ service for salvation. The other is a filial covenant, where the soul takes Christ and salvation freely offered, and so is a son: "For to as many as believed on him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John, i. 11. Therefore, they do not serve, that they may get the inheritance; but because the inheritance is theirs, therefore they serve, Gal. iv. 24. and downwards. To take hold of God's covenant, is for a poor empty-handed sinner to come and live freely on Christ; this is to come and buy from him. In order to bring this charge home, I shall mention some evidences of the above practice.—Such as,

(1.) Persons looking upon, and making use of the sacrament only as seals of their vows, and not as seals of God's promises. I do not say but the sacrament is a seal, to seal our engagement to be the Lord's; but this is but the one half, and even the least half, as I take it, 1 Cor. x. 16. Why then do people so overlook this, but because, not being shaken out of themselves, they look more to the

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the confirming of their resolutions, than their faith and communion with Christ in his fullness?

(2.) A second evidence is, persons coming to the Lord in this ordinance, rather to engage themselves to duties, than to get strength for the performance of them.

(3.) A third evidence is, persons drawing their peace and comfort, rather from their duties, and the performance of that to which they have engaged, than what Christ makes over to sinners in the covenant of grace. It was not so with David, for the covenant itself was all his salvation, and all his desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. But when the other works, he expects his wages; when he fails, he has no hope, as one who has broken covenant with Christ. But, when the true covenanter fails in his duty, yet all that his soul depended upon still remains, a covenanted righteousness; all that he trusted to for his duties also remains, to wit, covenanted strength, Rom. vii. 24. 25. and viii. 1. And so there is new application for covenant-benefits; whereas, when many fail in their covenant, all is gone, and it must be made over again, ere he can have any new footing.—This trifling appears, when,

7. Persons lay hold on Christ with a faith of which the mighty power of God was not at the forming, Eph. i. 19.; but is merely the product of a person's natural faculties. Most men's faith is like wild oats that grow up without the labour of the husbandman. They come too easily to it, to make any sure work by it. The evil heart of unbelief is not so easily shaken off as men imagine. Those who find no difficulty, do but trifle and beat the air; if the work were heartily plied, it would not be so easy.—We now proceed,

III.

III. To inquire how people come to turn such solemn work into trifling.—They do so,

1. Because they have no due consideration of the worth and preciousness of their souls, they do not suitably value the great salvation : Matth. xxii. 5. " But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." Men will not trifle in matters which appear to them of great concern. But men who do not duly value their souls will venture them on they know not what. But who considers eternity, and the weight which lies on the soul's transacting with God ? If men had eternity in their eye, and were transacting as for eternity, communicating for eternity, they would act in another manner, and not thus trifle in so important a business.—They do so,

2. Because they know not what a God they have to do with, they think that he is altogether such a one as themselves, Psal. l. 21. Men transact in their duties with, they know not whom, and therefore they act they know not what : Josh. xxiv. 19. " And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord ; for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins." When people have mean thoughts of God, they are ready to think any little thing may serve him.—They thus trifle,

3. Because they know not their own hearts, and their deceits : Jer. xvii. 9. " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ?" There are many secret biases there, to which they do not advert. Men may be hypocrites, and not know themselves to be such. The heart has a depth of deceit, which is not easy to fathom, which will make men say, with Saul, I have performed the commandment of the Lord, while

while, after all, the bleating of the sheep will discover the deceit.—They thus trifle,

4. Because sin has never been made bitter enough to them. It is hard to wean us from the love of lusts, if the breasts of them be not laid over with gall and wormwood. We must dig deep, and build upon the rock. Where the fallow ground is not plowed up, there will be a sowing among thorns, Jer. iv. 3. The consent of many to take Christ, such as it is, is too lightly won to be solid.—They thus trifle,

5. Because they are hasty and indeliberate in their engaging. They fall a-building ere they count the cost, Matth. xiv. 25.—31.; what is rashly done, is but slightly done in this matter. He that would make sure work, must lay his account beforehand with what he may meet with in the Lord's way. Then, meet with what they will, they will not be offended.—They thus trifle,

6. Because they have never got a sufficient discovery of their own utter weakness and insufficiency. They think they have a stock, and therefore may trade with it, and are very ready to undertake, though their heart will certainly misgive in the performance. This is building on the old foundation of nature; whereas, there will never be sure work, till this foundation be razed. If any man will come after Jesus, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him.—It only remains that,

IV. WE make some application. This doctrine may help us to see the reason why so many return with the dog to his vomit. There is an error in the first concoction. That you may beware of this, we would exhort you, to make sure work in your transacting with the Lord. O do not trifle in so important

important a concern!—To guard you effectually against this, consider the following things.

1. Consider, this is to put, so far as you can, a solemn cheat on the great God: Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is a dangerous thing to mock God. His all-seeing eye knows how you deal with him, and can penetrate through all your pretences.—Consider,

2. It is to put a solemn cheat on your own souls; you thus deceive your own souls. If you trifle with God, you will find at length a sad disappointment: Isa. 1. 11. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." As ye sow, ye will reap. Sow the wind of hypocrisy, and you will reap the whirlwind of wrath.

3. Consider the weight of the matter; the salvation or damnation of the soul is no small business; if you manage it right, you may get your salvation sealed; if not, see Luke, xiv. 24. "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

4. Consider, if you thus trifle with God in this matter, you will be discovered. The man without the wedding-garment was soon found out. You will not hold right to the end; you will return to the vomit; your latter end will be worse than your beginning.—Consider,

5. That you have a deceitful heart; it is necessary to be sure with it; it will soon give you the slip, and break the bonds, if they be slightly put on.—Consider,

Lastly, If you make sure work, you will find the eternal advantage of it. All the blessings of
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the covenant will be your portion. You may get a feast: "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word."

I shall close with the following short DIRECTIONS.

Set about the work of self-examination. Inquire particularly at your hearts, whether they be willing to take Christ; and renounce all other lovers, and to take him wholly, only, and everlastingly.—Pray that God may examine you, and discover yourselves to yourselves; lay yourselves open to self-searching.—*Lastly*, Put your hearts into the Lord's hand, as sensible that in yours they will miscarry. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N L X I.

DEUT. v. 29. *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.*

YOU have been this day avouching the Lord to be your God. You have all had an offer of Christ, and there was none heard tell of protesting against him; nay, did not your hearts say within you, Even so I take him? Many of you have, before angels and men, sealed a covenant with him this day, and we may report to the Lord, that you have said you are content to be his. O that there were such an heart in you, all would be well!

Having, in the preceding discourse, offered all that we intend from the first doctrine, we now proceed to

DOCTRINE II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding with the profession of a covenanting

nanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

HERE I shall,

I. Shew what a heart such a heart is.

II. Make it appear, that such a heart is a most valuable thing.

I. WE are to shew what a heart such a heart is; and on this head, the particulars shall be mostly taken out of the context.—We observe,

1. That such an heart is a heart that has got a view of the majesty and glorious perfections of that God with whom we have to do: Deut. v. 24. “And he said, Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.” The eye saw this; all would have been right, if the glory of the Lord had thus shined in their hearts. An unenlightened heart in the knowledge of the Lord looks so like hell, and unlike heaven, that it cannot be such a heart. A dark heart will make a dark confused conversation. There is no right worshipping of an unknown God. This view of the Lord’s glory is necessary. Moses desired it, Exod. xxxiii.; and all get it in a greater or less degree: 2 Cor. iii 18. “But we all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” If ye have seen the King in his glory, and his train filling the temple, it is a token of good. But, alas! many see the chair of state, who behold not the King sitting in it.

2. It is a heart filled with the fear of God. “O that there were such a heart in them, that they

would fear me." Indeed they professed it, and they had a tolerably sufficient measure of it, had it been but of the right stamp, and had it got leave to have soaked kindly into their hearts. But, alas ! it was only like a scud of rain violent in the time, but wetting only the surface of the ground, and soon dried up. But O for such a heart as would fear always ! not with a slavish distrustful fear, but a filial reverential fear, a fear of circumspection. Such a heart as would keep the eye upon the majesty of the Lord, would promise to keep right : Heb. xii. 28. " Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." A heart wanting this, will be like an unruly horse without a bridle : Prov. xxv. 28. " He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

3. It is a humble heart. O how humble did they seem to be now under the sense of their own sinfulness, and the holiness of that God with whom they had to do ! A heart humbled indeed is a valuable blessing. When Christ lances the swelling of the heart, and lets out the filthy stuff of pride and self-conceit, makes the man low in his own eyes, he is even preparing a house for himself on earth ; for the Lord " dwells with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. They durst not go near the mountain to touch it, they looked as they would rather have rolled themselves among the dust of the Lord's feet. " O that there were such an heart in them !" The honest heart is shaken out of self-confidence, for a right sight of the Lord in his glory, and of our own vileness, go always together :
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Isa. vi. 5. "Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is a heart filled with wonder at the goodness of God, his condescension and patience towards sinners, ver. 24. and 26. That soul will wonder that God should ever have come in speaking-terms with vile man; that ever any thing should have proceeded out of his mouth, but arrows dipped in the vinegar of the curse, to have slain the traitors outright. And will God thus indeed deal with man? It will be the wonder of that soul, that God hath not consumed it, mingled its blood with its sacrifices, struck it dead at the communion-table. O how wonderful that they should have spoke with the Lord, and are yet alive!

5. It is a heart convinced of the need of a Mediator, and resolved to employ him in all causes betwixt God and them, ver. 27. It is not every one that sees their need of Christ, and their need of an Advocate to go betwixt God and them. But he who has such a heart will look on himself, in himself, as dry stubble, as he looks on God as a consuming fire; and all his own duties and attainments, as a wall of dry boards which will not keep the fire from him, but increase it, and desire to have Christ betwixt them and a holy God; as a chrystal wall, which may let through the light, but not the flame of that fire. His very name will be precious to that heart, for it is "as ointment poured forth," Song, i. 3. How sweet is the name of a Redeemer to a captive, and to a humbled sinner, one who may lay his hands on both!

6. It is a heart taking the Lord only for their

God. They professed they would have no more to do with idols, though it was not long ere their hearts turned to their old bias : *Exod. xxxii. 8.* " They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, they have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." But such a heart renounces all other lovers, gives Christ's rivals their leave, and halts no more betwixt two opinions. If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all, that is, part with all but Christ. When a man gets such a heart, there is an extraordinary uproar made in the soul ; when it enters the man's breast, Satan cries as these, " They that turn the world up-side down, are come hither also." There is a strange overturning of thrones there. As when Christ and the gospel came into the world, the world, which before was wholly given to idolatry, then made great reformation ; oracles were struck dumb, idols were cast to the moles and to the bats ; so when the man gets such a heart, down goes the clay-god, the world, and Christ mounts the throne ; neither back nor belly must be gods longer to the man, king self loses his crown, which is put upon the head of Christ, and free grace. The heart, which was divided among many lusts before, enters now on Jesus, the beauty of the upper house.

7. It is a heart for the Lord's work, *ver. 27.* It is a heart which inclines the man who has taken Christ's enlisting money to fight his battles ; which willingly stoops to the yoke of Christ's commandments, and is set to walk in the way of obedience. It is a heart reconciled to the law of God ; the soul being married to Christ, may not be barren, but must bring forth fruit unto God. When the

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Lord charges the heart, the bullock is tamed, and accustomed to the yoke.—To be more particular here, we observe,

(1.) That it is a heart for universal obedience, ver. 27. It wishes to neglect none of God's commands, but to have respect to them all, Psal. cxix. 6. When the heart is straight, it makes the conversation uniform. The Lord's stamp on every duty recommends it to the care of such a heart. The heart naturally is like some servants who promise to do all at the bargain making, but fail in the accomplishment, like the sluggard who will not plough because of the cold. But such a heart puts a blank in the Lord's hand, and makes no exceptions. Some sins lie nearer the heart than others, some a right eye, some but a left toe. The right eye must be plucked out; thou must put to thine own hand to this hard work, it must be with thine own consent. Amen, says such a heart; let bosom-lusts yield to Christ.

(2.) It is a heart for constant obedience. They limit no time. Compare the text with John, viii. 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." We have a sad account of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. xii. 1. "When he was established in the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." He was like many men, who make use of religion like a net, who, when they have caught their prey, fold up and lay by their net. But see the fountain of his apostacy, ver. 14. "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;" prepared or fixed, or established *not* his heart. But such a heart is for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in foul and fair weather, and will abide with Christ

Christ in a storm, when the summer vermin is not to be seen : Pſal. xix. 9. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." Trees planted in God's vineyard, watered by his grace, having ſuch a heart, are not like common trees, green only one while of the year, but thoſe are ever green, and are yielding their fruit in their ſeaſon, Pſal. vii. 3. Such an heart takes with the ſtock, and ſo lives by its ſap.

(3.) It is a heart reſolute in obedience. We will do it, ſay they, ſtand in the way what will. See the portraiture of ſuch a heart, Micah. iv. 5. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." Such a heart had Caleb and Joſhua, they followed the Lord fully. It made them row againſt the ſtream. It gives the man courage for the arduous enterpriſe. Heaven is ſweet in the eyes of all ; why then do ſo many go to hell ? why, they have not ſuch a heart. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, they have no courage to grapple with theſe. They ſee heaven afar, but there is a great gulph betwixt them and it, and they have not ſuch a reſolute heart as to venture on it, and heaven will not drop down into their mouths.

(4.) It is a heart that is content to know what is duty and what is ſin : "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God ſhall ſpeak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." And indeed that is a very rare heart ; for moſt people are very glad to lodge luſts ; as ſome lodged intercommuned people, they are willing they ſhould get houſe-room, but are deſirous that they themſelves ſhould not ſee them, ſo as to know that they are there. But ſuch a heart loves to know the whole counſel of God : John, iii. 20. "But he that doth truth cometh

cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." It is a none-such heart, which is content to have all anatomized and searched out; which in every case is ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" which is content to sit down at Christ's feet and learn all; while others lodge their lusts under disguise, and loath the discovery of them, rebel against the light, and shut their eyes, till God judicially blind them, so as that they at last come to believe lies.

(5.) It is a heart to which God's bare will is a sufficient reason both for faith and practice. Such a heart receives the speaker for the word's sake, and not the word for his, but for God's sake. Such a heart receives the kingdom as a little child, who has authority enough if father or mother say it. Such a heart had Abraham; he gets a strange commandment, for which he could see no reason but the will of God, Gen. xxii. Father and son must part, not to see other more in this world, though the son of the promise. The father himself must do the deed. Here were many deaths both to the father and to the son; but God's will was revealed, and they were about fully to obey; then says the Lord, ver. 12. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God;" that thou hast such a heart.—We go on to observe,

8. It is a heart that has high and honourable thoughts of God, ver. 24. "Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." His greatness: "O that there were such a heart in them!" They professed this. High and honourable thoughts of the husband

husband is necessary to the comfort of the married state, and to the performance of duties. The queen stands upon the right hand, Psal. xlv. 9. Mean thoughts of God are the neck-break of right obedience to him. They think him such an one as themselves, Psal. l. 31. Hence mean pitiful services are thought sufficient. They forget that he "will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified," Levit. x. 3. Such a heart is let into the view of his greatness in some measure, so that its conclusions will be, Psal. xcv. 3. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." So that the soul's familiarity with God will yet be managed with a due regard to the awful greatness and infinite distance betwixt God and the creature. And this may serve as a help to distinguish true communion with God from delusions, Heb. xii. 28. 29. John, xx. 28.

9. It is a heart which the voice of God has reached, ver. 24. (quoted above). O that this voice had had as much access to their hearts as to their ears! Paul spoke, and God spoke, and Lydia's heart was opened. "My sheep," said Jesus, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John, x. 27. To honest covenanters there is something more in preaching than a bare sound, something more in sacraments than bread and wine: These are but the vehicles of the Lord's voice to the soul, and the ordinances are empty things when there is no divine fire infolded in them. There is a voice of the Lord in our mother's house; in the public ordinances there is a good report of Christ. Sinners are invited, objected, commanded to hear and believe. But Christ comes into the inner chamber of the elect's hearts, and there he gives his voice, which is a majestic

jestic voice, a heart-melting sound : Jer. xxiii. 29. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It thaws the frozen affections. A quickening voice that puts activity in the soul; it puts the spirit in motion, so as that it rests not till it has taken up its rest in God : John, vi. 63. "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

10. It is a heart which takes up with the Lord for its God, even when he appears in the glorious robes of his perfect holiness. This they professed; but "O that there were such a heart in them!" The truth is, the carnal mind is enmity against God; and none but saints indeed can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, Psal. xxx. 4. God is glorious in his holiness indeed; but none will love him for that glory, but such as are partakers of the divine nature. Those who love him for this, love him for himself. And indeed such a heart, being a holy heart, will cleave to the fountain of holiness, to the end that they may be transformed into the same image. To take God in the robes of mercy, is not strange; but God's holiness chafeth unholy hearts away from him.

11. It is a heart sensible of that vast distance which sin has made betwixt God and the soul, which has got such a sight of its own sinfulness, and God's holiness, that it sees there is no transacting with God but by a Mediator, ver. 27. Such a heart will say as Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." Such will not offer to come into the presence of God but as introduced by the King's Son, nor will desire to look on God but as veiled with flesh, knowing that a sight of unvailed majesty is enough to confound a sinner.

sinner. And truly, till the Lord touch the heart, it will not be such a heart, but, like a fearless beast, will touch the fiery mountain. Such a heart will highly prize Christ, and come to the Lord under the vail of Christ's flesh, and will have no boldness of access but what flows from the blood of Christ, Heb. x. 19. 20.

12. It is a heart reconciled to the whole law of God, ver. 27. It is not every heart which is such. They only have it, "who walketh not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Rom. viii. 1. Hypocrites hearts are never reconciled to the whole law of God. They cannot say they are not ashamed in having respect to all God's commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. There are always some parts of the Bible, which hypocrites would spend their blood on to blot them out, if that would do. Here, there is a raging lust says yea; there, there is a holy law says nay; the heart cannot be reconciled to both at once. Both may be in the experience both of the sincere Christian and the hypocrite. What is the difference? why, the hypocrite would fain have the law to his lusts, the sincere soul would have his lusts bow to the law. For he "delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man," Rom. vii. 22. And his heart will approve the law, when it forbids, accuses, and condemns his corruptions, ver. 16. "If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law, that it is good."

13. It is a heart which is for taking the law only out of Christ's hand as Mediator, ver. 27. The Mediator first makes the peace between God and the sinner, then bids the man work. But the law of itself first bids sinners work, and tells them they shall have their peace according to their work; which would be dreadful news to such a heart. Under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21.

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The law, cast into a gospel-mould, is the only law such a heart desires to meddle with, that, "being married to Christ, they may bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4.; that, being by Christ made partakers of the adoption, they may serve as sons, not as hired servants or slaves.

Lastly, It is a heart ready for obedience, ver. 27. The soul then stands at mount Zion, and says, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." They have had Christ's banner in the banqueting-house, as being ready to rise up and fight his battles, under the conduct and influence of their glorious leader. Such a heart has eaten the passover with its loins girt, and with a staff in its hand, ready for the journey. The heart that is for obedience, but not yet, is not such a heart; it is but a shifting heart, which will end in a refusal. It is but a civil way of putting off for altogether: Psal. cxix. 5. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

WE now proceed,

II. To shew that such a heart is a most valuable thing.—It must be so: For,

1. Such a heart is God's delight: "O that there were such an heart in them!" This would give content to the heart of Christ. This is his rest. The very prayer of the upright is his delight: Psal. xi. 7. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Such a heart is pleasing to God; and it cannot be otherwise, for it is shapen out according to his mind. The person who has such a heart is another David, a man according to God's own heart. It is a heart which, as believing, pleaseth God; a heart well pleased with him, in which God is well pleased.

2. It is that heart without which the largest
VOL. III. C c profession,

profession, and the most express covenanting with God, is little worth. Without this heart men do but as the Lord's enemies, they lie unto him. And it is a dangerous thing to lie unto the Lord, like Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie in their mouth. They take God's name in vain. The voice indeed is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's. It is but mocking God, and juggling with the holy One. It is but doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, and offering the blind and the lame for sacrifice, which will bring down a curse instead of a blessing. Let a man be at never so much pains in duties, yet still the one thing is lacking while they have not such a heart.

3. The want of this heart is very grievous to the Spirit of Christ. The Lord doth thus, in the text, lament their want of it. If any thing pierce the heart of God, it is when, with a covenanting people, there is wanting such a heart. What can be more grievous in a married lot than when the husband has not the wife's heart? Ezek. vi. 9. "I am broken, says God, with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a-whoring after their idols." There can be no contentment in that condition, as Haman said, "Yet all this availeth me nothing," Esth. v. 13. And a soul's grieving the Lord's Spirit, is a forerunner of the Lord's grieving them: Psal. xvi. 4. "Their sorrow shall be multiplied that hastens after another god."

4. God accepts of the duty, and is well pleased with the bargain, where there is such a heart: "O that there were such an heart in them!" There wants no more to complete the bargain betwixt them and me. Then, as they call me their God, so would I call them my people by a saving relation. But where such is not, the contract betwixt Christ and the

the soul is written indeed, but it is not signed. Would you know, then, if Christ be yours, with all the benefits of the everlasting covenant? why, if you have such a heart, you have Christ's heart, you are married to the Lord, and shall never be put away. A voice of the word without, and an echo to it of the heart within, closes the bargain: Psal. xxvii. 8. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." See also, Jer. iii. 22.

5. Where there is such a heart, God will be well pleased with the person, and accept the duty, though it have many defects; albeit he be not pleased with these defects, yet in mercy he will overlook them: "O that there were such an heart in them!" As if he had said, O if they were but honest in the main, I would not be severe on them for every escape. The Lord will use the indulgence of a father for such infirmities: Song, v. 1. "I have drunk my wine with my milk." *Milk*, that is, he accepts the meanest work where there is such an heart. A groan, a tear, a breathing after the Lord, is accepted; as the father loves more the lisping child's expression of its affection to him, than all the towering compliments of a flattering tongue, 2 Chron. xv. 17.; the eye of their faith, though, like Leah's, a bleared eye, Song, iv. 9.; the fire of their love, though weak, ver. 10.; the hand of their confidence, though a trembling hand; the anchor of their hope, though feeble, Psal. xlvii. 11.; their feet of obedience, tho' lame like Mephibosheth, yet shall they be set at the king's table; though their very sincerity be not without a mixture of hypocrisy, Gal. ii. 13. yet it holds weight in the balance; Christ takes their petitions, though not every way well drawn, blots out some, fills up other things in them, and gets

them answered. Their will is accepted for the deed; their grief for want of will, for the will itself;—all this where there is such a heart.

6. They will never prove stedfast in the Lord's covenant without such a heart: "O that there were such an heart in them!" They have spoke fair, but they will never keep a word they say, for they have not such a heart: Psal. lxxviii. 37. "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." The heart is the principle of actions; such a heart is the principle of perseverance; and there can be no stedfastness without a principle: Matth. xiii. 6. "And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away." The tree which is set in the ground, but does not take root in it, will be easily blown over. The house without a foundation cannot withstand the storm, Matth. vi. 23. They who have covenanted with God without such a heart, will make foul work, it will appear that the devil has gone down with the sop, their former lusts will be swallowed over again, 2 Pet. ii. 20.—22. Their last state will be worse than the first. Their vows will be no stronger than Samson's withs; their resolutions, like the walls of Jericho, will fall down at the sound of the horn of temptation.

7. Such an heart will fence the man against apostacy: "O that there were such an heart in them!" They would not then turn away from me; they would keep by their covenant: Luke, vii. 15. "But that on the good ground, are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Cleaving to Christ with constancy, without apostacy, is the very essence of such an heart. Gold is not gold, but dross, if it do not continue in the fire.

fire. Men's hearts may get some light strokes of the Spirit, some fleeting motions of the same, and the heart still unsound as the stony ground. But if the Spirit of God and of glory rest not on the heart, it is not such an heart: 2 John, ii. 27. "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you;" the fire of true love will be preserved, though it flame not, whatever cools there may be taking place. Such an heart has learned so much of the grace of God, as to deny worldly lusts, and all forsaken lovers, when they come to court the soul. Where such a heart is, there is the root of the matter in the man, Job, xix. 28. ; and there is sap enough to keep in the life of it, Prov. xii. 3. "The root of the righteous shall not be moved. Yea, the Root of Jesse has engaged that this root shall not fail," John, iv. 14. They are kept through the power of God. God is careful of the leaves of Christianity, Psal. i. 3. much more of real Christians themselves; therefore says Job, chap. xvii. 9. "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Be their light never so weak, it will last, yea, it will grow, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. It is the abiding seed of God.

Lastly, Such a heart enriches the man who has it: "O that there were such an heart in them!" they want no more to make them happy here and hereafter. Grace and glory, and all good, is the portion of those who have such an heart. Such an heart has taken Christ, is married and knit to him, and then Christ is your's, all is your's; pardon, peace, and every blessing; as he who gets a hold of the main link of a chain, draws all after him: "There the Lord commands the blessing, even life which never ends."

We shall conclude this discourse with beseeching you to be in earnest that you have such a heart. This is that which you all need, that without which you must be miserable for ever.—It is a most invaluable blessing, what you should highly prize; what is precious in God's esteem, and what he is urgent with you that you may possess: "O that there were such an heart in them!"

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LXII.

DEUT. v. 29. *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.*

HAVING considered, in the two preceding discourses, the first and second doctrines proposed from this subject, we now go on to

DOCT. III. and last, That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart-work; or, That solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart-work.

IN treating this point, we shall,

I. Produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work.

II. Shew when solemn covenanting is not heart-work.

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business.

IV. Shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business.—And then,

V. Apply the whole.

WE are,

I. To produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work. It is of importance that you may be stirred up to take heed to the deceits which we may discover in this weighty business.—With this view, we observe,

1. That apostacy and defection from the good ways of the Lord, persons returning again openly to the same courses which they pursued before. This is an evidence, 2 Peter, ii. 19.—22. Matth. xii. 45. “Then the evil spirit goeth, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” They who have no root soon wither away, Matth. xiii. 6. There are many who, since the Revolution, have solemnly covenanted with the Lord at sacraments, and many who have done it, when they durst not so well avow it as now, who have given a sad account of themselves since that time, having returned to their former courses of wickedness and profanity. Fallen stars were stars never but in appearance. To lose both life and leaf, is a dreadful symptom: John, xv. 6. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”—Another evidence is,

2. When

2. When some lusts are maintained in Christ's room, as when an adulterous woman takes another man instead of her husband. There are some lusts from which the heart is never loosed, right eyes they cannot part with ; this is secret apostacy from the Lord : Heb. iii. 12. " Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." When the Lord offers himself to sinners, he says, If you will take me, let these go their way. Some enter into a marriage-covenant with the Lord, but they give their hearts to other lovers, Psal. xiv. 4. (quoted before). This is hypocritical dealing with God, which is a disease in the vitals of religion, Psal. lxxviii. 37. (quoted above).—Another evidence is,

3. Persons making their covenant with the Lord, a cover to their sloth, and a pander to their lusts. It is sad work which persons make of covenanting, when it serves only to conjure their consciences, who hence can sleep more securely in their sins. Many are never more light, vain, and frothy, than after such a work ; a most shrewd sign of a whorish disposition : Prov. vii. 14. " I have peace-offerings with me. This day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face." The covenant of God is a covenant of peace and war, which inclines the sinner to be at peace with the Lord's friends, and at war with his enemies. It makes the soul to say to former lusts, I have learned from the gospel, to " deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus, ii. 12. Hence, Christ no sooner enters the heart, but he comes as Captain of the Lord's host ; and the person's heart thus becomes the seat of war : Gal. v. 17. " For the flesh lusteth
against

against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these two are contrary the one to the other." And these lusts which were formerly gold chains, are now turned into heavy iron fetters : Rom. vii. 24. " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"—Another evidence is,

4. The barrenness of the lives of professors, nothing of the fruits of holiness appearing in their lives. We are, Rachel like, barren, having no more but the leaves of a profession, the performance of external duties, to give us the name of Christians. Alas ! fire from heaven seems to have blasted many of us, and the curse of the Lord is as a worm at our root. Married to the Lord, and yet barren, is a contradiction, Rom. vii. 4. For the very end of this marriage is, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. Where the soul is joined to the Lord, it is made the habitation of the Spirit ; and this is that which produces the fruits of holiness : Eph. v. 9. " For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

Here some may say, Alas ! this speaks death to me, for do what I will, the weeds in the cursed soil of my heart suffers no fruit to appear there. To such I answer.—There is no fruit which grows in the heart of a believer in the world, but it has a weed of corruption by the side of it ; their faith is marked with unbelief, their hope with diffidence, their very sincerity with hypocrisy. But are you at pains to pluck up these ? If you should look into a garden, and saw nothing but weeds in it, yet if you saw the gardener weeding it, you would conclude there must be something else there ; so in this case. Will you see if there be any thriving of undergrowth in your hearts, if you be growing downwards in humility, self-loathing, self-denial, depending and
cleaving

cleaving more from a sense of need to the Lord? Eph. iv. 15. 16. Barren trees use not to have their branches hanging down to salute the ground, unless they be broken off by a violent wind.—Another evidence is,

5. The having no communication of the life of grace from Christ to the soul: John, xiv. 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Food and raiment are what every soul married to the Lord get from him. If the soul be truly united to Christ, it will partake of the root and sap of the vine: John, vi. 57. "He that eateth me, saith Jesus, even he shall live by me." True faith opens a way for a stream of blood to run through the heart, by which the soul is purged and quickened. The blood of Jesus "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. But, alas! the faith of many is like a pipe laid short of the fountain, and so brings none of the water of life into the soul. Many covenant with the Lord as the seven women, Isa. iv. 1. who take hold of one man, as it is there said, they will be called by his name; for so is Christ's spouse, in token of her marriage-relation, she loseth her name, and takes her husband's, Isa. xlv. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." This will take away their reproach before the world, and it will do much to silence the blustering tongue of an ill-natured conscience. Yea, but after all this, they will eat their own bread, Isa. iv. 1. They will live upon their own stock of natural and acquired abilities, for they are not, as in Matth. iii. 5. "poor in spirit." They come not, as true believers, with a weak soul to a strong God, an empty vessel to a full fountain. Thus does the true believer, who says, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless

nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." But the other will live on their own lusts; Christ gives rest to their consciences, and their lusts give rest to their hearts; he shall bear up their hopes, and their lusts shall satisfy their desires.—They will wear their own apparel: Rom. x. 3. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Their duties make a great figure in their own eyes, and therefore are cyphers in God's account. Hence, the more they do and the better they do, the more are they in conceit with themselves, and the further from Christ. It is quite contrary with true covenanters: Phil. iii. 3. "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:" Rev. vii. 14. "They wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb."—We shall only add as an evidence,

Lastly, The having no contentment in Christ alone. Where the soul heartily closes with Christ, he is to the soul a covering to the eyes: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Hence the triumph of faith, even when all external things fail: Hab. iii. 17. "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." But, alas! how many of us have no comfort, but when the cisterns of creature-comforts are running full! how few arrive at the height of rejoicing in the Lord, when these cisterns are dried up! Mat. xiii. 45. 46. Every person's house stands upon two props, Christ and the creature, but the weight lies only upon one of them. Take away the world from the believer,

liever, he stands firm on the rock Christ; take away the world from the hypocrite, and all falls down together. A person may bear to have some branch of his comforts cut off; but when God strikes at the root of creature-comforts, then may the hypocrite say, Thou hast taken away my gods, and what have I more? Some can endure any thing but poverty, for covetousness reigns in them; others any thing but disrespect, for pride is their idol.

Here again some may say, If this be an evidence, we know not who will make sure work, for many time gracious persons are as much, if not more, cast down with the loss of creature-comforts, than others! To this I answer, No doubt gracious souls will sometimes be more joyful on the receipt of a temporal mercy, and more cast down on the loss of them, than others; for the chief thing which affects him is the face of God appearing in it, either as favourable or frowning; so that they will be ready to say on such an occasion, as in Gen. xxxiii. 10. "For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me." And this will make a mole-hill mercy or cross appear like a mountain. The godly in this case fetch their comfort from the Lord, others fetch theirs from something else in the world; when one stream runs dry, they go to another, like the prodigal before he came home. The drying up of the streams sends the gracious soul to the fountain.

WE now proceed,

II. To shew when covenanting is not heart-work, but a trifling business.—It is so,

I. When the soul is not divorced from sin. The heart is naturally glewed to sin, and it is im-

possible that the heart can at once be both for the Lord and lusts, Matth. vi. 24. The first marriage must be made void before a second can be made sure. They must have their covenant with their lusts broken, who will have their covenant with the Lord sure: Hosea, xiv. 8. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Living lusts and the living Lord will not both get the throne of the heart. In the day of espousals, when Christ gets the crown, lusts get the cross. Many will be in suit of the heart, and the heart for a time may be halting betwixt two; but in a covenanting day with the Lord, all others must be discharged: Psal. xlv. 10. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."—Here some may inquire, How may a person know if their heart be divorced from sin? Answer, That which makes the man and his lusts one, is the greedy grip which the heart takes of sin, it is the heart cleaving to its lusts: Jer. viii. 5. "Why then is the people of Jerusalem sliddden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." The heart and affections in sin are like the hot iron, where the iron and the fire are very close together. The man's lusts are to him like a leg or an arm which is knit to the body with joints and bands. Now, where the heart is divorced, it loaths that sin which before it loved. Though sin cleaves to the man, yet he cleaves not to it, Rom. vii. 17.—22. Never was the captive more desirous to be loosed of his bands, than that soul to be free from sin. Like a weak honest virgin, though it cannot shake itself loose of its grips, yet it would be content if one would set it free.—Solemn covenanting is trifling,

2. When the soul is not divorced from the law,
Rom.

Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God." Legal professors do but trifle with the Lord, and never make heart-work of covenanting with him. They may bind themselves faster and faster to duties, but there is no engaging their hearts to the Lord of duties; they are as they who would draw up with the hand-maid instead of the mistress; and do but bind themselves to the work of spinning out their own ruin out of their own bowels. There is a generation who get some convictions of their misery by sin, the law comes and takes them by the throat, and then they cry, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Hence they bestir themselves, and fall a trading to gain something for heaven and eternal life; they set about secret duties, attending public ordinances, and take the sacrament, and the effect of all is but to wreath their necks faster in the yoke of law-bondage, and to remove themselves farther from Christ. This is but trifling.—If it be inquired, How may one know if they be divorced from the law? you have the word, Gal. ii. 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The law comes home to the soul with such force and power, that it cuts off all hopes of the soul's ever mending itself by its works; makes the soul see its utter emptiness and weakness; and hence it dies off, and lies at the foot of free grace, with that prayer in its mouth, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Then Christ's blood is the soul's only refuge for

guilt, Christ's Spirit for holiness; and the soul will have no peace but what comes from this blood; while many, instead of this, lick themselves whole of their wounds by confession, mourning, prayer for pardon, and engaging not to do so any more. But it is quite different from this, when, as above, the Spirit of Christ leads his divorced bride out of the house of her former husband to Jesus himself.—It is so,

3. When the soul comes not heartily and freely to the Lord in his covenant, Psal. lxxviii. 34.—

37. The Lord will not meet that soul. He cares not for persons giving the hand, when they do not give him their hearts. Indeed this is a covenant which speaks out the extreme naughtiness of men's hearts, by their coming into it grudgingly and perforce. The sacrifice that is dragged to the altar, will not be accepted, it will run away from it again. It will be like the strong bough which is forcibly bowed, which will soon fly back. When the Lord comes to a soul, he deals with the heart. He touches the heart, as he touched the hearts of Saul's companions, 1 Sam. x. 26. Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord hath appeared to me of old, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." There is grace in the Lord's lips, heavenly rhetoric to catch a sinner's affections, Psal. xlv.

2. When the Spirit of the Lord pours in overcoming grace, then the man pours out his heart before him, Psal. lxii. 8. Thus the people becomes willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx.

3.—Here we may shortly state and consider two cases.

Case 1. What shall become of those, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror? I answer, Those who are only driven by terror, they will even leave him

him again when the terror is over, for terrors will break a heart of stone, but will not melt it. At the same time, terror may begin the work, which love will crown: Hosea, ii. 14. "Therefore, behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." When the Lord is to match with sinners, they are bold and perverse, they will not speak to him, till he has shot an arrow into their flesh, till he has made them prisoners of war; and then, when he has them in chains, he makes love to them. He first drives the sinner, and then he draws him like Noah's dove into the ark, Gen. viii. 9. The Lord sets the avenger of blood in pursuit of the poor criminal, he with a heavy heart leaves his own city, and his old acquaintances, and flees for his bare life to the city of refuge, to which he has no inclination, but *must do* is a great thing. When he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellencies and loveliness of the city charm him; then he says, This is my rest, here will I dwell.

Case 2. I often find, when I am to go to the Lord's table, a great backwardness to the duty. What should be done in this case? I answer, There is a great difference betwixt a man's turning his back and running away from his friend, and a sickly man's coming slowly to him. And if I might be allowed so to speak, I should distinguish between a backward heart, and a backwardness upon the heart: Matth. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." A backward heart is a foolish heart, and will make sad work of a communion: Prov. xvii. 16. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" I wish the Lord may turn

this people from the Lord's table, till he has turned their hearts back to himself; or else, when they have put their hands to the plough, they will after all leave it, and injure religion more than if they had never meddled with it. But for others, our Master allows you to come as you are able, with your burden upon your back, and lay it down at his feet: Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Psal. lxxv. 3. "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." The great Physician knows very well his patient comes with heart and good will, though his sickness and indisposition makes him come with a slow pace.--It is trifling,

4. When the soul comes to the Lord in his covenant for peace to their consciences, but not for victory over their lusts. Many come to the Lord, as a sick man to the physician, to cure him of his wounds, but not to live upon his charges: Psal. lxxviii. 34. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." They have use for the blood, not for the water, which came from the side of Jesus. This is but half-work, not heart-work. Enemies to the spirit of holiness are enemies to Christ. I never think it the best frame for a communion-table when people sit down at the Lord's table chiefly for peace and comfort. A view of the King, a transforming sight which might strengthen the soul, to have this before our eyes sitting down at the feast, would certainly be most safe. To get a touch of the hem of Christ's garment, for stopping the issue of sin, will be salutary indeed.--It is so,

5. When the soul accepts of conditional promises, but does not accept of and receive the Lord himself in absolute promises. This is to agree

agree upon the less points of the covenant, and to neglect the main point, Heb. viii. 10. The great thing God offers in the gospel is Christ. He is a foolish man that would claim the benefit of the contract, while he neglects to marry the woman. It is a dreadful thing to turn the covenant of grace into a mere servile or mere social covenant, as passes betwixt neighbouring independent states. It is most properly a marriage-covenant, where the soul first takes the Lord himself, and then looks for the benefits accruing to it by the happy match. Natural men fancy a very easy covenant in,—“He that confesseth his sins, shall find mercy.—Call on me, and I will answer thee.—What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—He will accept the will for the deed; not considering that all the promises are yea and amen in Christ; and suppose they could perform the condition of these promises, yet they could not have benefit by them while they have not the Lord Christ, dwelling, living, and reigning in them.—It is solemn trifling,

Lastly, When there is not an absolute resignation of the will to the will of the Lord. This is to have reserves in our covenanting with the Lord. Man's will is the great rebel against the Lord, and must, if we make sure work, be bound hand and foot in a covenanting day. There must be a double resignation, (1.) To the preceptive will: Rom. vi. 17. “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you.” The soul must no more snarl with duty, but be content to take on the yoke of Christ's commands. And they who are not content to stand and receive the same commands from mount Zion, which were thundered into their hearts from
mount

mount Sinai before, their hearts are not for this work. (2.) There must be resignation to the providential will of God. It has been long a question betwixt the Lord and you, who shall be master of your process, who shall carve out your lot? Are you come to a point now? even to that point? Psal. xlvii. 4. "He shall chuse our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." It is well, you are wise; for our own will, and nothing else, is our wreck.

WE should now,

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business. But for this, see the third head of doctrine first.

WE proceed, then,

IV. To shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business.—This will appear if we consider,

1. That the Lord rejects the work: Mal. i. 13. "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts, and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord." Whatever pains persons may be at about covenanting, the Lord has no regard to it while it is not heart-work, Isa. i. 11. It is true, you may even sign the contract, but the Lord will not subscribe it, seeing it has not the upright consent of your hearts, Psal. l. 16. 17. You may expect the entertainment recorded Matth. xxii. 12. "Friend, how camest thou in thither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."—Consider,

2. That it puts men more securely in Satan's grips than before. In this sense that holds true which
you

you have in Isa. xxviii. 22. "Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," Publicans and sinners will enter before these. Such are twice dead, where the devil goes out and returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. The last end of such a person is worse than his beginning.—Consider,

3. That it exposes men to spiritual strokes: Jer. xlviii. 10. "Curst be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully."—Deadening strokes. These are silent arrows which fly from the hand of God into the soul without noise: Isa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Sometimes men are like Saul among the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked in the head by the secret judgement of God, because of their hypocritical dealing with him, it may be at a communion-table, in so much that they have never a day to do well after; and from that time God answers them not, but they live and rot above the ground; their hearts are deadened, their affections dozed, their gifts withered, and their souls blasted: John, xv. 6. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."—Quickening strokes, whereby the man is dreadfully alarmed, the conscience is awakened, and made like mount Sinai, where nothing but fire and smoak appear. God takes the filthy rags of their mock-covenanting, wraps them in brimstone, and sets them in fire about the sinner's ears. Their wounds which were scurfed over bleed more dreadfully, while the plaster they made will not stick.—Besides these, there are strokes

strokes upon their bodies. As Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1. 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear, 1 Sam. vi. 19. God smote Uzzah, and he died by the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xi. 30. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."—Consider,

Lastly, That however quietly people may get it carried in life, it will bring them a sad disappointment at death. The house built on the sand fell by the storm, and great was its fall. A great fall from high hopes into deep despair; like the foolish virgins, who were unexpectedly shut out.

WE are now,

V. To apply the subject.—Which we shall do only in an use of exhortation.

I would then exhort one and all of you to make heart-work and sure work in your covenanting with the Lord, and not to trifle in so solemn a business. You have heard the danger you incur by trifling with it. But perhaps some will say with a whole heart, that as they are resolved to keep themselves out of harm's way, they will not come to the Lord's table. To this I would answer, Well, will you not enter into covenant with the Lord? if not, then you will never see heaven: Eph. ii. 12. "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Where will you appear at the great day? Psal. l. 1.—5. You must take hold of the Lord's covenant, or be damned. Sirs, if ye enter at all into this work, my exhortation reaches you. You may trifle with God upon your knees, as well as at his table. And if you be not minded to refuse this covenant, why stand you back from the seals of it?

it? why do you not prepare yourselves for it? why slight you this love-token of our dying Lord? I would think, if you were in earnest for the covenant, you not would slight the seal of it. Make sure work then. To induce you to be serious in this weighty work, I would mention and urge the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. You have need to make sure work, for you have deceitful hearts to deal with, Jer. xvii. 19. Let not the bands be put on slightly, or it will soon slip them all. Therefore dig deep, by serious solemn examination of your consciences before the Lord, that you may build as on a rock.

Mot. 2. Consider the weight of the business; the business of salvation, or damnation, is not a matter to trifle with. Sirs, life and death are before you. Your eternal state lies at the stake. I beseech you then, by all that weight of glory that awaits the saints, as you would not ruin your souls, which a thousand worlds cannot repair, for the loss of the soul cannot be made up, that you seriously consider the business.

Mot. 3. Consider the Lord is not trifling, but is in good earnest with you: "O that there were such a heart in them!" There is a match proposed betwixt the King of glory and the daughter of Zion, the Bridegroom is willing: Rev. iii. 20. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." There is nothing wanting on his part: Matth. xxii. 4. "All things are ready, come unto the marriage:" How passionately does he call for her consent in the text! And now, when the Lord is thus offering himself to you, why will you refuse or trifle with him?—Here some may propose this,

OBJECTION. This is a flourish which may pass well enough in a pulpit. But, O! if the Lord were really

really offering himself to me, I would never refuse. To this I answer, The offer is real, though ministerial. We have our commission from our Lord to bear us out in it, and he would do the same if he were here bodily present: 2 Cor. v. 10. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Hence, in the days of his flesh, he offered himself both to those that did, and those that did not receive him. Consider, he said to his disciples, "He that heareth you, heareth me." We are the friends of the Bridegroom; as Abraham's servants, we are come to bring you to our Master's son. What would you have to make the offer real, if you may not take it as such from the mouth of his messengers? Would you have him leave his glory a second time, and come in person to make the offer? Or would you have him come down in his glory? If so, you know not what you ask. It would set you better to do as Abigail, bow yourself to the earth, and humbly accept of the offer, 1 Sam. xxv. 40. 41.—So real is the offer, that if you refuse, ye will be damned for the refusal: Mark, xvi. 15. 16. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." John, xvii. 20. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." See then what ye do. It is a serious business on the Lord's part, and there is a prize in your hands which you would do well diligently to improve.—Does he indeed offer himself to me? do you say? notwithstanding my unworthiness. Yea, to you, we make no scruple to offer him particularly to every
one

one of you, the vilest of you all : Rev. iii. 20.
“ Behold I stand at the door and knock : if any
man hear my voice, and open the door, I will
come into him, and will sup with him, and he
with me.” It is not unworthiness, but unwilling-
ness, that will mar the bargain : “ The Spirit and
the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say,
Come, and let him that is athirst say, Come, and
whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.

A RICH FEAST PREPARED FOR
HUNGRY SOULS*.

S E R M O N L X I I I .

ISA. xxv. 6. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

THE prophets of old prophesied of the grace of Christ which should come unto us, 1 Pet. i. 10. ; and of these none more than our evangelical prophet, who, in the verse before us, foretells a rich spiritual entertainment which should be made by the Saviour Jesus Christ unto a starving world of prodigal sinners, reduced by their extravagance into extreme want.—Here there is to be observed,

1. The Maker and Master of the feast, the Lord himself ; it is a royal feast, with which the King of Zion entertains his own subjects. Particularly, it is the Lord Christ, the Son of God, who, pitying the famished condition of poor sinners, was at the expence of this costly feast for them ; for the
maker

* An action-sermon, delivered June 7. 1719.

maker of it is the same who swallows up death in victory, ver. 8. A warlike title is ascribed to him, the *Lord of Hosts*, for there is a banner in Christ's banqueting-house; and this feast looks both backward and forward to a war.—You will observe,

2. The guests for whom this feast is provided: It is made for *all people*. Not that every person does actually partake of it, nor that every person without exception is invited to it; the event shews the contrary, there being many to whom the sound of the gospel never comes; but intimating, that the invitation is given to all who come in its way, without distinction, or exception of any sort of persons: Matth. xxii. 9. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." The invitation is to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, to these in the highways and hedges, as well as those in the city. All who will come are welcome.—You may observe,

3. The guest-chamber where this feast is held: *In this mountain*, namely, mount Zion, that is, the church. To that society all must join who would partake of this feast. And as mount Zion represents both the church militant and the church triumphant, so these are one church, one body; and it is one feast, as to its substance, Heb. xiii. 22.—24.—You will observe,

4. The matter of the feast: A feast imports abundance and variety of good entertainment; and here nothing is wanting which is suitable for hungry souls. This is held forth under the notion of the best meat and drink, because what these are to the body, the same is the gospel-feast to the soul. In this valley of the world lying in wickedness, there is nothing for the soul to feed on but carrion, nothing but what would be loathed, ex-

cept by those who were never used to better; but in this mountain, there is a *feast of fat things*, things most relishing to those who taste them, most nourishing to those who feed on them; and these are *full of marrow*, most satisfying to the soul.—In this valley of the world, there is nothing but muddy waters, which can never quench the thirst of the soul, but must ruin it with the dregs ever cleaving to them; but here, on this mountain, are *wines on the lees*, that is, the best of wines, which having been kept long upon the lees, are therefore strong and nourishing. And these wines are well refined, being carefully drawn off, and quite separated from the lees or dregs, and therefore clear and fine. They are undreggy comforts; they afford the most refined satisfaction and delight.—From this subject we take the following

DOCTRINE, That Jesus Christ has prepared a most rich and delicious feast for the souls of all those who will come to him, and partake of it as presented to them.

In speaking upon this pleasant and interesting subject, it is intended,

I. To shew the absolute need that there is of this provision.

II. To explain what the provision is which Christ has prepared for the souls of a famished world.

III. To consider what sort of a feast it is.

IV. To confirm, that all people who will come, may come, and partake of this feast.—And then,

V. Conclude with a practical improvement of the subject.

We

WE are then,

I. To shew the absolute need that there is of this provision.

The distinguishing need for this provision was the extreme necessity of a lost world, which, by Adam's fall, the great prodigal, was reduced to a starving and famishing condition. The King of heaven set down Adam, and his posterity in him, to a well-covered table in paradise, in this lower world, making a covenant of friendship with him, and with them in him. Man consists of an earthly part and a heavenly part, a body and a soul; and as every thing must have nourishment suitable to its nature, so, although the body might, yet the soul could never be nourished by the best produce of the earth. Therefore, by virtue of that covenant, it was concluded, that, upon condition of perfect obedience to it, they should have provision for their souls from the King's country. But man being drawn into rebellion against God, this prospect was lost, and their table was drawn; Adam and all his posterity in his loins were driven out of the guest-chamber, the family was ruined, broken, and scattered, having nothing left them.—To impress this the more upon us, let us view how our first father left us.

I. In point of need, he left us with hungry hearts, like the prodigal: Luke, xv. 16. "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him." Every man and woman naturally has a gnawing appetite after happiness and satisfaction. This is so interwoven with man's nature, that it never leaves him in any state whatever, and so will make a part of the torment of the damned: Isa. viii. 21. "And they shall pass through it, hardly bested and hungry; and it shall come to

pafs, that when they fhall be hungry, they fhall fret themfelves, and curfe their King and their God, and look upward." Every one finds himfelf not felf-fufficient, and therefore his foul cleaves to fomething without itfelf to fatisfy it. Listen, O Chriftlefs finner ! who art deftitute of holy defires, and thou fhalt hear a voice within thine own breaft, faying, Give, give, a continual noife. Look into thine own heart, and thou wilt fee it, in refpect of defires, like a neft of young birds, all gaping for a fill, but never fatisfied, ftill gaping, after all that is put in their mouths.—He left us alfo with thirfty confciences, feorched and burnt up with heat, fo that moft of them are in the dead-thraw, and many of them quite feared. Hence the gofpel-invitation is, Ifa. lv. 1. "Ho ! every one that thirfteth, come ye to the waters." In a natural ftate there can be no confcience but an evil confcience, the thorn of guilt is not pulled out of it ; it is a defiled confcience which needs to be fprinkled, Heb. x. 22. And though a fleeping confcience in many, yet fuch is the thirft of it in all the fons of Adam, that, when awakened, they cry out, We die, we perifh, we all perifh, Luke, xv. 17.

2. In point of fupply, he left us without any profpect, for all communication with heaven was ftopped. War was declared againft the rebels, fo that there could be no transportation of provifions from thence, Gen. iii. 24. Truth had faid, Gen. ii. 17. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou fhalt not eat of it : for in the day thou eateft thereof, thou fhalt furely die." And therefore, though mercy might incline to fupply a ftarving world, juftice interpofoes, and pleads that there could be no communication betwixt God and the finners, without a fatisfaction, which they

they nor angels could not make ; and therefore, without satisfaction, they must be famished for ever. Thus heaven's doors were closed on a starving world.—Now, there was a mighty famine upon the earth, such as was with the prodigal, Luke, xv. 14. “ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want.” Adam's sons, abandoned of Heaven, fall a-begging at the world's door, if so be they might find rest and satisfaction in the creature. They go after a law-righteousness, if so be they might find a rest to their consciences. But it fares with them in this search, as with the unclean spirit gone out of a man. He goes through dry places seeking rest, and finding none returns disappointed. When they have traversed all the mountains of vanity for something to satisfy their hungry hearts, they find nothing but husks to feed on with the swine ; which are the empty and unsatisfying things of the world, that can never feed their souls, Luke, xv. 16. The poor sinner, out of Christ, is like the hungry infant, which sucks at every thing to which its mouth comes near, and shifting about, and getting nothing, falls a-weeping ; but the appetite continuing, the infant falls a-sucking again, where formerly it was disappointed. Such is the life of every natural man, a continued tract of lustrings after, and disappointments from the creature. So that he is born weeping, lives seeking, and will die disappointed, if not brought to the feast of fat things. Again, they find but dust to feed on with the serpent : Isa. lxv. 25. “ And dust shall be the serpent's meat ;” that is, they suck at the defiled breasts of their lusts, which can never satisfy, but poison the soul. They cannot find their satisfaction in lawful worldly comforts ; and therefore, like hungry beasts, they break over into forbidden ground,

ground, and all to satisfy a gnawing appetite after happiness. But there they are as far from their mark as ever. For, though the enjoyment of a lust may please them for a while; yet it is but like a man, eating or drinking in a dream, he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul has appetite, Isa. xxiv. 8. There is a bitter dreg remaining behind. Striking at this rock for water, they cause fire to flash out on their faces; and sucking at these breasts, draw out blood instead of milk. Travelling through the barren region of the law for something to satisfy their scorched consciences, they can find nothing but muddy and salt waters, which can give no ease truly satisfying, but raises the thirst again. For the purging of the conscience is what the law cannot do, Rom. vi. 3.; compared with Heb. ix. 14. What can duties do to the purging of the conscience? Isa. lxiv. 6. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Will mud wash out mud? What can tears do for this end? Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Even our tears must be washed in the Mediator's blood, or they will defile the conscience, and leave a new stain in it. What can trusting to uncovenanted mercy do? and such is the mercy of God in respect of all who are not in Christ, Acts, iv. 12. 2 Cor. v. 19. They may make a plaster for their wounded consciences of these, they may lay it on, but all their art can never make it stick, it will fall off before the wound heal.

WE come now,

II. To explain what the provision is which Christ has prepared for the souls of such a famished

ed world.—This, in a word, is his precious self; the Maker of the feast is the matter of it, even Christ crucified; his body broken for us, is that feast to which hungry souls are called, and which they are to feed upon: “Take, eat, this is my body broken for you.” Gal. ii. 20. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” We have heard of mothers who have eaten their own children, but who ever gave themselves to be meat unto them? But Jesus died that we might live, gave himself to enliven and nourish our souls.—Let us consider,

1. The *meat* which is served up in this feast for the hungry heart. This is Christ’s body: John, vi. 55. “For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” Never was there such a costly feast in the world as this, Christ’s body broken and bruised by justice, that it might be food to us. This is the provision offered to you all in the word, exhibited to you, O believers! in the sacrament. And ye may eat, and must eat of it, or you will perish: John, vi. 53. “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Take him by faith, receive him with a faith of application, and unite with him in the covenant; relish the sweetness of Christ, improve every part of Christ, his low birth, his sorrowful life, his bitter death, his burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.—Christ’s body is the fat things of this feast, which will completely satisfy the hungry heart; so that thy soul feeding upon it by faith, shall be filled and satisfied, like the hungry infant, when
it

it is set to its mother's full breasts: Psal. lxxxi. 10. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." How can these things be? will an unbelieving world say. We answer, in two things.

(1.) There is a fulness of the spirit of sanctification in him, which is communicated unto all who receive him: John i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." And the more eagerly that the soul feeds on him, the more of that spirit they receive. The first entering of his spirit into the soul gives life; the further measure of the spirit, gives life more abundantly. And there is a double effect of the spirit of sanctification received from Christ.—[1.] The spirit of Christ in the soul dries up the devouring deeps of unmortified desires after the world of lusts, stops their mouths by stabbing them to the heart, that the soul may live spiritually: John, iv. 14. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Never thirst, that is, at the rate he did in his natural state. Gasp they may, as a thief upon the cross, but they shall never gape so wide and so incessantly as before, the soul being determined to starve them.—[2.] The spirit of Christ in the soul stirs up holy desires in the heart, which are the predominant motions and affections there: Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The man's choice is altered, his desires run in another channel. Sometimes it was, Who will shew us any good? but now it is, Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance, Psal. iv. 6. Now his longings are
after

after the Lord, Psal. xlii. 1. and lxiii. 1. His sorrowings are for the want of his presence; his comfort is in enjoying the light of his countenance. If he has a God in Christ to be his God, you may take from him what ye will: Psal. lxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." Let these desires be satisfied, and he is filled as with marrow and fatness.

(2.) The fulness of the Godhead is in Christ: Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The tabernacle of meeting betwixt God and the sinner is the flesh of Christ; in him they have the enjoyment of God as their God. Taking Christ by faith, God is their's, for he and the Father are one: thus in Christ they are complete, Col. ii. 10. They are at the utmost stretch of their desires as to the substance of them; for having God to be their God, they have all. And thus the soul may feed on all the perfections of God: on his power, as their's to protect them; his wisdom, as their's to guide, &c.; on his word and all the promises of it, which are their's. Here there is both plenty and variety.—Let us consider,

2. The *drink* which is afforded at this feast for the thirsty conscience. This is the precious blood of Christ: John, vi. 55. "My blood is drink indeed." This is that spiritual drink which is offered in the word, and exhibited in the sacrament: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." If ever you would have life, you must all drink of this blood, by a believing application of it to your own souls: Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—

This

This is "wines on the lees, well-refined," effectual for purging the conscience of the most guilty creature, when it is believably applied to the soul: Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This blood is atoning blood, it answers all the demands of justice, affords a covert under which a guilty creature may stand before God, and not be condemned: Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."—It is sin-expiating blood, "shed for remission of sins unto many." Lay all your guilt over on this blood. It will blot out all the items out of the debt-book of justice; it will draw the sting out of your conscience, for which all other persons and things have been physicians of no value.—It is peace-making blood. Lay the weight of your peace with God on it: "Christ is our peace," Eph. ii. 14.—It is justifying blood; by it is brought in an everlasting righteousness.—It is heaven-opening blood, for time, in access to God and communion with him on earth; and for eternity, that believers in it may be ever with the Lord, Heb. x. 19. 20. How can these things be? Why, in one word, this wine is the juice of the choice vine of heaven, it is the blood of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite value, 1 John, i. 16. When the blood of bulls and of goats could avail nothing to cool the heat of scorched consciences, when rivers of oil, and the fruit of one's body, could avail nothing for the sin of the soul; the Son of God took on him man's nature, and in that nature died, shed his precious blood, to be a ransom for elect sinners, to deliver them from the pit, Job, xxxiii. 22.—30.

WE

WE are now,
 III. To consider what sort of a feast it is.—Upon this we observe,

1. That it is a feast upon a sacrifice: 1 Cor. v. 7. 8. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore, let us keep the feast." Justice was provoked by the conduct of self-destroying sinners. God's anger was incensed against us, and the fire of his wrath has burnt up many. And when wrath was gone out against the world, the great High Priest stepped in, and offered up himself a sacrifice to atone for sin, and turn away divine wrath. Here we are called to a feast on that sacrifice, to partake of its virtue and efficacy.

2. It is a covenant-feast, Heb. xiii. 20. 21. When Jacob made the covenant with Laban, they feasted together on the mount, Gen. xxxi. 44.—54. There is no partaking of this feast, but by the way of the covenant. All the guests must be covenanters, and they who are not pleased with the covenant of friendship and peace with God, as held forth in the gospel, cannot taste of this supper. But those who are well pleased with it, and sincerely consent to it, Christ says to them, "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

3. It is a marriage-feast, a marriage-supper, Mat. xxii. 1.—4. The Lord Christ is the Bridegroom, and the captive daughter of Zion the bride. He offers himself to each of you to whom the gospel comes, to be yours in a marriage-relation. Consent then to the match, and ye shall eat of this bread, and drink of this wine which he hath mingled. He is yours, and you have all, which he hath purchased, to feed on for time and for eternity.

4. It is a feast which has a respect to war. The

Lord of hosts made it. It looks backward to that terrible encounter which Christ had with the law, with death, with hell, and the grave, upon the account of his ransomed ones, and that glorious victory which he obtained over them, by which he wrought the deliverance of his people. The gospel-feast is a feast upon the back of that victory, and the Lord's supper is particularly a feast in commemoration of that battle and victory. It looks forward to a war: Song, ii. 4. "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." It is provided for and presented to his people to animate and strengthen them for the spiritual warfare against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and none can truly partake of it, but those who are resolved on that battle, and are determined to pursue it, till they obtain the complete victory at death.

Lastly, It is a weaning feast, Gen. xxiii. 8. There is a time prefixed in the decree of God, at which all who are his shall, by converting grace, be weaned from their natural food. And with this their sitting down to this feast agrees. Where is the soul which is now weaned from their sucking so long at the dry breasts of the world? that soul shall have the sweet enjoyment of this feast; and the more that they feed, the more they will be weaned.

WE now proceed,

IV. To confirm, that all people who will come, may come, and partake of this feast. Not that all may immediately partake of the sacrament, but that all may and should receive Christ, with his benefits, offered to them in the gospel; they are made most heartily welcome.—To make this appear, consider,

1. Christ

1. Christ invites all without distinction, even the worst of sinners, to this spiritual feast: Isa. lv. 1. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." John, vii. 37. "If any man thirst," said Jesus, "let him come to me and drink," Rev. xxii. 17. "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." These are gospel-invitations, clogged with no conditions, comprehending all who are willing to receive Christ, whatever their case is or has been.—Consider,

2. For what end does Jesus send out his messengers with a commission to invite all to come, if they were not welcome? Matth. xxii. 9. "Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Nay, the Lord is very express in the welcome given to the worst of sinners, Jer. vii. 1. Isa. i. 18.; and directs his messengers to invite the most unworthy and unsightly persons to this feast: Luke, xiv. 21.—33. "Go out quickly," says he, "into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."—Consider,

Lastly, That he takes it heinously amiss when any refuse to come: Luke, xiv. 21. "He was angry;" angry, because those who were invited would not come. He not only invites you, but you are commanded on your peril to comply with the invitation: 1 John, iii. 23. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And do what ye will, if ye slight the offer, ye cannot please him; for without faith it is impossible to please God.—It only remains, that

V. WE make some practical improvement; and this shall be confined for the present to an use of exhortation.

1. We would exhort all hungry hearts who are suing for satisfaction in the world and their lusts, and whose consciences have no solid resting-place, O! come to Jesus Christ in his covenant, and sit down to this feast prepared for you and the like of you.—To prevail with you, I would mention the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. While ye come not to Christ, you have nothing commensurable nor suitable to the cravings of an immortal soul. All other things are but as stones or ashes, they are not bread: Isa. lv. 2. “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” The man was a fool, who bid his soul take ease from what he had in his barns. Nothing less than a God in Christ can ever satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul, a soul which was created capable of enjoying an infinite good. And nothing but the blood of the Redeemer will ever give solid peace to your consciences.

Mot. 2. Should not the continued tract of disappointments ye have met with at other doors, engage you to come to Christ’s banqueting-house? Jer. iii. 23. “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.” Have you not always found creature-comforts greater in expectation than in fruition? How often have ye looked for much comfort, where you got little? And has not your greatest crosses arisen sometimes from these quarters whence ye expected your greatest comfort?

Mot. 3. In what ye are now pursuing, consider that

that there is not only vanity and emptiness, which will disappoint you, but there is death in the pot, which will destroy your souls. There needs no more to ruin you, but that you be left to your own heart's lusts, and take your swing. Fearful will the reckoning be, when so much time, pains, and labour, are laid out on the pursuit of the world, and the immortal soul is quite neglected as to its eternal welfare, Eccles. xi. 9.

Mot. 4. If you will come to Christ, ye shall get true rest; rest to your hearts, rest to your consciences, Matth. xi. 28. Whatever your wants be, there is a suitable fulness in him; a fulness of merit, to carry off your guilt; a fountain, even the depth of the sea, to wash it away; a fulness of the Spirit to kill your corruptions; of righteousness to cover your unrighteousness; of light for your darkness; of strength for your weakness.

Lastly, Consider, if you will come, you shall be happy for time and eternity. When the lower table is drawn, you shall sit down at the upper. If not, you shall never know satisfaction, nor find rest to your souls.—I would exhort,

2. Communicants to feed on Christ at his table. Let not the feast be in vain to you. Dead sinners, those destitute of spiritual life, are not fit guests for the Lord's table, for they cannot feed. Such will eat and drink judgement to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.—Here it may be inquired, How may one know if he has any spiritual life? To this we answer, Whosoever has spiritual life will be sincerely longing to be rid of the grave-cloaths of sin: Matth. v. 6. "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." They will be content to part with all sin, and resolved henceforth to oppose every lust, as a limb of the body of

death; not only sin in general, but the iniquity which is in their hearts, and with which they are most easily beset. They are willing also to lay aside the grave-cloaths of self: Matth. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." They will look on the rags of their own righteousness but as grave-cloaths also, and set themselves against all motions of this tendency. In a word, they are for doing all as if they were to win heaven this way; at the same time, overlooking all as if they were doing nothing.

Now, to you living and believing communicants, we acquaint you with Christ's welcome: Song, v. 1. "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Take it, and use freedom in his house. Eat, drink abundantly. Let your souls feast indeed at this gospel-feast, and miss not the opportunity.—I will only say to you, as the angel to Elijah, 1 Kings, xix. 7. "And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." You have a great journey to go, and it is a question if you get such another meal set before you, ere you be at the end of it. You have a twofold journey, each of which requires you to eat.—You have,

1. Your journey through the world, towards the Canaan above. It is difficult at all times; so as that many never dare venture on it, others never make it out, for it lies through many difficulties. The devil, the world, and the flesh, will struggle with you, to give over this journey, of lying well through the world. It is like to be more than ordinarily difficult in our times. A spirit of delusion threatens a dark and misty day. Labour to taste the power of truth, if you would
be

be established in it. A Popish and malignant spirit threatens with darkness, blood, and confusion. This is evident, if we consider the apostacy in these nations from the once covenanted work of reformation, the blood of the saints yet lying at their doors, with the profanity and irreligion which is abounding among all ranks. As we have reason to think the Popish and malignant party in these nations, setting up for a Popish pretender, are infatuated of God to their own ruin, that they may get blood to drink; so we have ground to fear God may make them a scourge to the nations, and perhaps by them he may drive them to reformation. Whatever, then, the clouds may turn to, eat for a wilderness-journey.—You have,

2. Your journey out of the world, that is, to die well. It is a weighty journey from time to eternity. Eat for it this day, and do as you will wish to have done when you come to a dying-hour. It may be some will not have as much time to think on it when it comes, as they will have this day at a communion-table. And that at a communion-table you may eat,—labour to have your appetite after Christ sharpened. Open your mouths wide, and he will fill them. Consider well your own needs, and his fulness.—Adore the wonderful condescension of the great God. Reverence his greatness; but beware of slavish fear and amazement. Look to God through the vail of Christ's flesh.—In a word, beware of unbelief. Rest not in a general faith; but exercise a faith of application: Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Amen."

THE DISTINGUISHING PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S
FAITHFUL SERVANTS*.

SERMON LXIV.

EXOD. xxiv. 11. *And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

THE Lord is calling us to come up to him into the mount of solemn ordinances; and though there may be some who will abide at the foot of the hill, unconcerned and stupid, like Abraham's servant and the ass, I hope there are others who will desire to go forward, though it is likely there may be a struggle betwixt hope and fear about their entertainment there. How are your hearts affected upon this awful approach? are they saying within you, as these Greeks, "We would see Jesus?" Or, as the prodigal Jew, Luke, xv. 17. "We perish with hunger." And at the same time with the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. vi. 19. "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord

* This and the following discourse were delivered at Maxton, August 11. and 12. 1716.

Lord God?" Our text gives you encouragement from this instance of the nobles of Israel. Upon God's call they came up to the mount; and (which divides the text into two parts), *first*, They were safe: *And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand*; *Secondly*, They were kindly entertained: *Also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*—We shall attend to these separately.

The *first* part is, they were safe in their approach. Moses remarks this, to the praise of the divine clemency in a Mediator, through whom sinners may see God, and not die. Sin has set man at such a distance from God, and put his body into such a weak and mouldering condition, that consciousness of guilt and a sight of the divine glory meeting together, is more than enough to exanimate and make him faint away, to break the corrupt earthen pitcher the soul dwells in to pieces. Hence it was a common opinion, that such a sight was deadly.—Consider here,

1. The parties whose safety is particularly remarked, *the nobles of the children of Israel*. Some reckon Nadab and Abihu among these; but if so, why not Moses and Aaron? It is plain they were all there, ver. 9. and 10. I think, however, it is only the seventy elders who are meant; and therefore it is expressed emphatically in the Hebrew, intimating, that not only was Moses, the typical Mediator, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, who were designed to be priests, preserved; but even the elders, the representatives of the people, these also were safe.—You will accordingly observe, that the people are as welcome to the divine favour, and to gracious manifestations of God, as ministers. Tho' ministers be employed to open the doors of the temple, the people stand as fair for a sight of the glory within as they do. Though Moses, &c.
went

went up foremost to the mount ; yet no man should either value himself before the Lord, or be discouraged upon the character which he bears. Ordinarily, people will pray that ministers may be helped in their public ministrations, to preach, &c.; but they should even also be concerned, that they may be helped to believe, taste, feel, and feed, with the rest of the children.

They were *nobles*, great men, rulers of the people ; yet they went up to the mount with Aaron, and sat down to the sacred feast there, after they had taken the national covenant of Israel with the rest of the people, ver. 8. 9.—You will thence observe, that it is the honour of the nobles of a land to see God, and to be seen upon the mount with God, at the sacred feast, as covenanters with him. This was some time the honour of Scotland's nobility and gentry; they were forward in the national covenant with God ; and we have heard the days have been, when scarlet-cloaks and velvet-hoods bare great bulk in such meetings as this. But, ah ! how is our gold become dross ! they leave these things now mostly to the common people, with contempt of both. What wonder is it that they have been left to make themselves the tail, and not the head ! to row us into deep waters, where the state is sunk, and the church is broken ; to turn Babel-builders, so that for once the scaffolding is broken, and the builders, with many others, heavily crushed. For, “ these that honour God, he will honour ; but they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed.”

There were *seventy* of these nobles, the number of the children of Israel when they went down to Egypt, and so a fit number to represent the body of the people, who were now solemnly taken into covenant with God. God saw it not meet to give
this

this sight of the divine glory to the multitude, and to set all down to the sacred feast on the mount; but, since it was covenant-entertainment, the seventy were brought to it, as the representatives of the people. Thus also the New-Testament church is represented by twenty-four elders about the throne, Rev. iv. 4.—From this you may learn, that safe communion and fellowship with God is the privilege of the church of believers, the Israelites indeed.—That all the people of God have not alike nearness of access to God; some come farther forward than others. Peter, James, and John, were taken up to the mount of transfiguration, and not the rest of the apostles.—That it is a mercy to have an interest in, and relation to, these who are brought near to God, especially such as will act for us in the mount with God. There may be some young ones here, whose fathers or mothers are to approach the table of the Lord. I would advise them to tell them to mind them there. Say, ‘I cannot go, but, O! give up my name to Christ, consent you in my name to the covenant, and tell your covenanted God, I am also content to be his.’ Or, if you have not father or mother, tell any other godly person ye know. And so may one distressed Christian do with another: Song, v. 8. “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.”—We may observe,

2. How their safety is expressed: *He laid not his hand upon them*, that is, did not hurt or destroy them, Gen. xxxvii. 22. Though they saw God, (ver. 10.), yet they died not, their lives were preserved. This imports, that he might in point of justice have laid his hand on them. They were sinful creatures; and though they were on the
mount

mount of God, yet they had a sinful nature with them, which did leave the marks of it even upon what they did there. But he overlooked their weakness, and in mercy spared them.—This instructs us, that when we are at our best, if God should mark our iniquity, we could not stand before him. We are ever in mercy's debt, and cannot be one moment safe without being under the covert of blood. Even in heaven, it is, under that canopy the saints will feast for ever, Heb. vii. 25.—It also imports, that the weight of his hand would have crushed them. If he had but laid it on them, it would have done their business. If he had but put forth his hand and touched them in wrath, they would have gone like a moth with a touch of the hand.—From this we may learn the utter weakness and nothingness of the creature before the Lord. He can touch it to destruction, and can frown it back, when he will, into the womb of nothing. Why, then, should we strive with our Maker?—More particularly, that the greatest of men are nothing before the great God: *Upon the nobles he laid not his hand.* Though they caused terror to their inferior fellow-creatures, they were as unable to bear the terror of God as the meanest in the camp of Israel. All flesh is alike before God.—You will observe,

3. How they came to be safe. The word *nobles* signifies select, separate ones, who had been set apart. They were selected out of the covenanted body of the people, to come up into the mount to the Lord, at his call. Moses gets an order for so many to come up with him, ver. 1. Having that order, he first proposes a covenant to the people, and they declare their acceptance, ver. 3.; then he writes the words of the covenant, and the covenant is most solemnly entered into, ratified, and sealed;

sealed; there is an altar built to represent God in Christ, ver. 4. and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes. Thus these were the parties. Sacrifices were offered, ver. 5. shewing the covenant to be founded on the blood of a Mediator. The half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, ver. 6. shewing it was not an absolute God with whom they were to covenant, but a God atoned by the blood of a crucified Saviour. Then he read the book of the covenant; thus proposing it to the people; and their second thoughts are as their first, they solemnly consent to it, ver. 7.; and he sprinkles the rest of the blood on them, and so it was sealed and ratified. Then, after all this, he and these selected elders go up to the mount, in obedience to the call formerly given; and there they saw God, and were safe notwithstanding. Thus, their separation was their security.—From which you may observe, That there is safety in following God's call, be the calling never so high. Had any of the people attempted to have gone whither they went, they had smarted for it; but being called, they were safe. Some, who measure reverence of God more by their own carnal wisdom than by God's word, cry out on us for not kneeling, but sitting, at the Lord's table. But though sitting be a gesture of more familiarity than kneeling, yet, seeing it is instituted, we may expect more safety in it, than in their kneeling, which, at the Lord's table, wants both precept and example.—We now come to the

Second part of the verse. They were kindly entertained in their approach: Also (or but) they saw God, and did eat and drink.—Here observe,

1. A glorious sight which they got.—Where consider,

(1.) The object, *God*, more largely expressed,

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ver. 10. "The God of Israel." Not any visible resemblance of the divine nature, but some glorious appearance and token of God's special presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ was known to the Old-Testament church by this name, the God of Israel. And that this was the Son of God, seems very plain from that word, ver. 1. "He said, Come up unto the Lord." Compare ch. xxiii. 20.—23. with Exod. iii. 2.—8. Now, he who sends is the Father, and it is the same who speaks here; and he speaks of another person, who also is the Lord. And, seeing we read of his feet, ver. 10. he seems to have appeared in a glorious human shape, as a pledge of his future incarnation. This, then, was a most glorious sight of Jesus Christ. Nothing is here described but what was under his feet; though the text seems to intimate they saw more, an inconceivable glory which mortals cannot make words of.—Consider,

(2.) The act, *they saw*. This seeing imports something more than that in ver. 10. for it is evident the first part of the verse relates to that seeing, ver. 10. And so the sense requires something more to be in this. Accordingly, they are different words in the original; this here signifies to contemplate and fixedly behold; from it our word *gaze* seems to be derived. It might be read, *They beheld God*; importing, not a transient glance, but a fixed view: John, i. 14. "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" which is still more admirable condescension, and accordingly it is emphatically expressed.

Now, consider this as following upon the solemn transaction of the covenant made by sacrifice.—It holds out to us, (1.) That the great end of the covenant,

covenant, next to the divine glory, is the happiness of the covenanters in seeing and enjoying of God. There it is completed. And beyond this the creature cannot go.—(2.) That not the sight of an absolute God, but of a God in Christ, is the covenanters happiness. None can see God in mercy but they, for there is no other way but that of the covenant; and their happy sight is nothing other than a sight of God in Christ. In Christ, all the lines of our hope meet for time and eternity.—Observe,

2. A blessed feast of which they were partakers : *They did eat and drink.*—Here consider,

(1.) What they did, *they did eat and drink* upon the mount. They feasted upon the remains of the sacrifices of the peace-offerings, ver. 5. And this in token of their hearty satisfaction with the covenant now made, their ready acceptance of the benefits of it, and their communion with God in pursuance of it. Thus believers their feeding on Christ and gospel-dainties is expressed in scripture : Psal. xxii. 25. 26. “ My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation : I will pay my vows before them that fear him : The meek shall eat, and be satisfied.” Thus they were admitted to a holy familiarity with God, to eat and drink in his presence : *They saw him, and they did eat and drink.*—Consider,

(2.) How they did it, with holy joy and comfort. This is implied in the connection, or opposition betwixt the parts of the text. They were so far from being slain with the sight, that they were not faithlessly frightened at it ; but, with a holy composure of spirit, they did eat and drink. What they saw was not like a cloudy sky to damp them, but as a clear one to refresh them. Holy reverence is necessary, but faithless fears in solemn

approaches to God, are displeasing to him, and hurtful to our own souls, for they hinder us from eating. Happy they who can believe and fear.—From this subject, we may take the following DOCTRINES, viz.

- DOCT. I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.
- II. That it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, see God, and are familiar with him, and yet come off safe.

WE begin with

DOCT. I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.

IN handling this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.

II. What is that holy familiarity which is their privilege in their solemn approaches to him. And then,

III. Improve the subject.

WE are then,

I. To shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.—There is a twofold solemn approach of God's people to him.—There is a right approach,

i. When God calls them up to the mount of myrrh, where our Lord abides till the day break,
Song,

Song, iv. 6.; when he calls them to come up to the hill of God in Immanuel's land, where stands the King's palace, namely, heaven. This call comes to the believing soul at death. Then, as Rev. iv. 1. there is a door opened in heaven to the heaven-born soul, which is now, as it were, wrestling in a mire of corrupt flesh and blood in the body, and the voice is heard, Come up hither. This will be a solemn approach when the soul of the meanest believer shall go up thither, attended with a company of holy angels, and, like Lazarus, be carried by them into Abraham's bosom, Luke, xvi. 22.—It will come to both souls and bodies of believers at the last day: Psal. l. 5. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And then God's covenant-people, who dwell in the dust, shall awake from their sleep, come out of the lowly darksome house of the grave, and enter into the King's palace, Psal. lxx. —Then they shall see God in Christ to the completing their happiness for ever. Then they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, 1 John, iii. 2. We know little now of this sight in glory, 1 Cor. ii. 9.; but it vastly transcends all sights got of him here.—There it will be immediate, they shall see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.—Perfectly transforming, 1 John, i. 2.—Everlasting, without interruption, without intermission. They shall be ever with the Lord: But on this we insist not—There is a right approach,

2. When God calls them to come up to the mount of ordinances, to meet him at the sacred feast, as the nobles of Israel in the text, and as we at this time are called, to feast on the great sacrifice in the sacrament. This is a solemn approach. Now, what is the sight of God

in Christ which is the privilege here?—As to this we observe,

(1.) That it is a believing sight of God in their nature, John, i. 14. (above). The nobles saw the Son of God in human shape, with their bodily eyes. But the great design of it was to shew the privilege of the saints by faith. O glorious sight! to see God in our nature, the divine nature, in the person of the Son, united to our nature! O high privilege! to sit at his table, and under the teaching of his Spirit, to spell the glorious name Immanuel, God with us. O the sweetness of every letter and syllable! God, the fountain of all holiness and happiness, we, the sink of all sin and misery: yet God with us. The personal union, the foundation of the mystical union; and so an holy God and sinful creatures are united through Christ.—We observe,

(2.) That it is a sight of this God in the place of his special residence; on the mount to which they were invited to, where he stood, as it were, on a pavement of sapphire. It is their privilege to see him on the mount of ordinances, at his table, the glorious place of his feet, Isa. xxv. 6. 7. O the high privilege of the saints! We were all born under a sentence of death, to see the Lord no more in the land of the living, and (as in Haman's case, Esth. vii. 8.) as the word goes out of the king's mouth, our face is covered. Some live all their days in this case, come to communion-tables, and go away in it. But the believer laying hold on the covenant, Christ draws off the face-covering, and then, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. They see the bread, the Lord.

(3.) It is a sight of the glory of the place
of

of his feet, ver. 10. It is a promise relating to gospel-days : Isa. lx. 13. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the face of my sanctuary ; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." The ark in the temple, and gospel-ordinances in the gospel-church. It is their privilege to see a glory there, where the world see none ; to see a majesty in the sacrament, a spiritual glory and heavenly lustre in the bread and wine at the Lord's table, as sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 29. This glory and majesty in the ordinances, must be discerned by faith ; and because it is beyond the stretch of the natural eye, therefore carnal wisdom in Rome, and the church of England, has gone about to supply its place with a great deal of external pomp, that may work upon the senses, defacing the simplicity of the institution. But after all, to a spiritual discerner, the external glory is as far below the spiritual glory, as artificial painting would in the eyes of the nobles have been below the natural clearness of the body of heaven.

(4.) It is a sight of God as reconciled in Christ. They saw God, and did eat and drink as in the house of their friend. This is the sight to be seen in the gospel-glass, 2 Cor. v. 18.—20. A refreshing sight to a soul pained with the sting of guilt. Christ has died, and his blood has quenched the fire of God's wrath against the sinner ; so that when on the mount he looks to the Lord, he sees as it were a clear sky under his feet : A sure token, that the storm is blown over, that there is peace from heaven, and an offended God is reconciled to us through his own Son.

(5.) It is a sight of God as their God. They saw the God of Israel. Here lay the surpassing sweetness

ness of their sight. Such a sight got Thomas, when his faith got up above his unbelief: John, xx. 28. "My Lord, and my God." And for this sight is the sacrament especially appointed, that the child of God may say, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. The nature of the ordinance leads to it, which brings the word preached in the general to every believing communicant in particular: "This is my body, broken for you."

Lastly, It is a sight of transcendent glory in him. Nothing is described but what was under his feet. For search the universe, there is no person, no thing like him. Even what was under his feet, is described to have been as a sapphire stone. But the best things on earth are not sufficient to set forth the glory even of this, and therefore it is added, "as if it were the body of heaven in his clearness." They who see him, see that of which they can never see the like.

WE are now,

II. To shew what is that holy familiarity which is the privilege of God's people in their solemn approaches to him.—It is a believing, holy, humble freedom before their Lord! Ephes. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." In the sight before us, the sense of their own unworthiness, and a sight of his glory, did not mar their faith, nor put them in an unbelieving frame. They did eat and drink; neither did the familiarity of faith mar their holy fear, or make them forget their distance; compare v. 1. where they were commanded to worship afar off, which no doubt they did. I will mention some instances of familiarity allowed them.

1. They

1. They were allowed to come forward to God, when others must stand back, Isa. lvi. 6. 7.; when others must abide at the foot of the hill, (and it is at their peril if they venture forward), believers may come up to the mount, and are welcome. They have a token from the Master himself: Song, v. 1. "Eat, O friends! drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!"

2. They were allowed to feast on the sacrifice set before them. Christ the sacrifice typically slain, and believers are allowed to feast on this sacrifice, to eat his flesh and drink his blood; to make a believing application of a whole Christ to their own souls for their spiritual nourishment: "Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you." You know what it is to feed your eyes on some pleasant object that is your own. The covetous man can feed his eyes on his bags of money. So believers are allowed to feed their eyes on Christ; beholding, and delighting in Christ; solacing themselves with his sweetness, and the sweetness of every part of the mystery of Christ.

3. They were allowed to converse with God freely, as one at the table of his friend. The peace being made by accepting of the covenant, the nobles were, and all believers are, set down to the feast in token of their communion with him: 1 John, i. 3. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The believer has liberty to tell the Lord all his mind, Ephes. iii. 12. (quoted above); to unbofom himself to a gracious God, and point particularly at what he would have, what he would be quit of. "What is thy petition?" says the King at the feast.

4. They were allowed to be in his secrets, to see

see what others have no access to. They *saw* God. Believers are allowed to see the glory of his person, John, i. 14. (above). The glory of his covenant: Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."—The glory of his redeeming, his everlasting love to them: Jer. xxxi. 3. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."—The hidden glory of his word: Luke, xxiv. 32. "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"—Hence,

Lastly, They were allowed to lay all their wants on him. When believers come to the mount, in his light they see light clearly, and at his table they are fed. Christ says to his guests, as Judges, xix. 20. "Peace be on thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me." Psal. lv. 22. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The Lord allows his people to lay all their burdens upon him;—the burden of their debt, the guilt of sin, he will answer for it;—the burden of the strength of sin: Micah, vii. 19. "He will subdue our iniquities."—The burden of their duties, and throughbearing in the way of God: 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—The burden of afflictions, crosses, trials: Isa. xliii. 2. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c.—The burden of their families: Jer. xlix. 11. "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive: and let thy widows trust in me."—The burden of their souls for time and for eternity: Isa. xli. 4. "And even to your old age, I am he: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear: even I will carry, and will deliver you."

WE now come,

III. And last place, to make some practical improvement.—And as a suitable improvement, we may observe, that this doctrine, like the cloudy pillar, has a dark and a bright side.—Dark to those that are not in the covenant.—Bright to all God's covenanted people.

1. It has a dark side to all natural men, strangers to the covenant, who are none of God's covenant-people.—Such are these,

(1.) Who are grossly ignorant of the doctrine of the covenant. It is a promise of the covenant: John, vi. 45. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and has learned of the Father, cometh to me." And therefore, such as are not thus taught, are not in it. No person stumbles in the dark into this covenant.

(2.) Those who never found the intolerable weight of the first covenant, the law. Ye cannot be in both covenants at once, Rom. vii. 4. And if ye be brought into the second, ye have found the yoke of the first intolerable: Gal. ii. 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Ye have been awakened to see your natural misery, and your utter inability to help yourselves by your doing or suffering; to despair of salvation in any other way, but through the obedience and death of a Redeemer.

(3.) Those who were never yet pleased with the frame of the covenant as God made it, who in all their pretended closing with Christ, have still had some secret reserves as to some beloved lust, or as to the cross.

(4.) Those who are still in league with their lusts, their hearts never divorced from them: "If ye take me," says Christ, "let these go away."

If

If Christ get the throne, the most beloved lusts will be crucified.—It has a dark side to you as long as you continue in this state. It accordingly says to you,

If you see God at all, it will be a dreadful sight you will get of him. It will be the sight of an absolute God out of Christ, breathing out fury and vengeance against you. And he that is a refreshing sun to others, will be a consuming fire to you. And how will you be able to abide this sight? Isa. xxxiii. 14.—It says again, Though you come to his table, you cannot come in safety. You run a dreadful risk while you go thither, breaking up into the mount, without a warrant from the Lord. And it is a dangerous business for an unholy soul to be found on holy ground, 1 Cor. xi. 29.—It says also, Though ye sit down at the feast, ye cannot taste the sweetness of it, the sap and juice of it, namely, a sight of God in Christ as your own God; and a holy familiarity with him as such will be denied you. For what have ye to do with the covenant-feast, who are strangers to the covenant itself?—It says, lastly, If ye snatch at the saints familiarity with God, you put forth your hand to that to which you have no right, and go beyond God's allowance. Remember, Matth. xv. 26. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." And therefore you can expect no other than this entertainment: Matth. xxii. 12. "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless."—But as this text and doctrine has a dark side to those who are not in the covenant,

2. It has a bright side to all God's covenant-people. Here is your privilege, O covenanters! you who are savingly in covenant. Ye are come

nto

into the covenant, ye are divorced from the law: Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." If divorced from the law, ye have given it fair count and reckoning at parting, and fallen on a way of payment to it; for the covenant to which you now belong was not made but by sacrifice. Some are like an obstinate woman, who will not stir out of her husband's house, though he should slay her; these are desperate ones. Some like a foolish woman, who runs away from her husband, without suing out a divorce, or reckoning with him for the wrongs done to him; these are the presumptuous, whom the law will bring back from the horns of the altar. But Christ's spouse, at parting with the law, acknowledged all its demands just; but being sensible of utter inability to pay, goes to Christ as the great cautioner, and turns it over upon him for all.—If divorced from the law, the law also will be dead to you. Where one is divorced from the first husband, he is as dead to her. The stream of your comfort by the law will be dried up, and it will flow from Christ alone. You will rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. You will not draw your comfort from your repentance, resolutions, vows, or reformation; but from the application of the blood of the covenant.

2. If ye be come into the covenant, your league with your lusts are broken. Though sin cleaves close to you, your hearts are loosed from it, and turned against it, Rom. vii. 17. You will hate it for itself, for its contrariety to the holy nature and law of your covenanted God, and not for

the grievous consequences of it on yourself only. It will be to you as the fetters on the captive, he cannot get loose of them; but well he knows they are not his choice, though they were of gold.—Your hearts will be loosed from all sin, your hearts will hate it universally: Psal. cxix. 128, “I hate every false way.” You will have a special eye for evil on your iniquity, so that you will gladly yield the offending right eye to be plucked out, and give your consent to the cutting off of the right-hand idol.—In a word, you have taken Christ, not for a shelter to your sins, but for a destroyer of them, 1 Cor. i. 30. Your business with the Mediator of the covenant will be as much for sanctification as justification, to partake of his holiness as well as his righteousness, his Spirit as well his blood, Matth. i. 21.

Lastly, Ye have come into the covenant, if ye have the covenanter's mark. The beast has his mark, and many are fond of it this day. Christ has also his mark, which he sets on his covenant-people.—There is the ear-mark: John, x. 27. “My sheep,” says he, “hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” See also Exod. xxiv. 7. Christ bores the ears of all that are his. They are taught of God, and have taken Christ for their teacher; they have a certain sense suited to discern Christ's voice from that of others, agreeable to their new nature: “A stranger they will not follow.” They know the voice of their Beloved, Song, ii. 8. They look to him to be taught the way in which they should go; their ears are open, and their hearts willing to know his will, that they may do it. They wish to have shown them his truths, his ways, and ordinances, that they may cleave to them, Acts, ix. 6.—Again, There is the fire-mark: Luke, xiv. 26. 27. “If
any

any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." He reconciles all his to the cross; and they are content to follow him at all hazards, and are fully resolved to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4.; to side with him, whoever side against him, being determined neither to be bribed nor boasted from him. Now, this doctrine has a bright side to all such, and bespeaks them as from the holy mount in this manner:

1. Come up hither to the Lord. Rise, the master calleth you to the feast at his table. Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, to Christ's banqueting-house, why stand ye without? Trample on all your doubts, whether they arise from the heaven above you, or from hell within you, and come forward to that God whose covenant you have laid hold on.

2. If you open your eyes, ye shall get a glorious sight of God in Christ. A sight which will be satisfying, and will darken all created glory. Though but bread and wine appear at his table, a greater than Solomon is there. Only believe; faith is the eye of the soul. Let us not have occasion to challenge your hearts after this communion with that which Christ said, John, xi. 39. "Take ye away the stone."

3. Use a holy freedom in Christ's house, for he allows you. And do not reckon yourself a stranger at his table, seeing the feast is to confirm the covenant, Song, v. 1. Make a believing application of all the benefits of his purchase. Say first of all, Song, v. 16. "This is my beloved,

and this is my friend ;” and then conclude, that with him all is yours.

Lastly, Fear not, O trembling soul ! Entertain indeed a profound reverence of God, but away with your faithless fears, which confuse and discompose the soul on the mount with God. Remember, upon the nobles he laid not his hand. Being in the covenant, you are under a covert of blood, and, by virtue of it, may assuredly expect safety.—Here some may propose this question, How shall we manage that we get this fight ? To which I answer,

Be exercised to take up the covenant in a suitable manner, ver. 4.—1. Take some time this night by yourselves, and consider the covenant,—your undone state without it,—the suitableness of it to your case,—the absolute necessity of being in it. Labour to understand it, and examine yourselves, as to your willingness to come into it.—Solemnly enter this night into the covenant, ver. 3. Though ye have done it before, do it again, and do it with more heartiness, ver. 7. Let this solemn transaction with God go before your solemn approach, and do not venture to set God’s seal to a blank, to sit down at his table, while ye have not honestly accepted of his covenant.—Again, sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on your souls, before ye venture to go forward, ver. 8. Apply Christ’s blood by faith to your own souls, laying the weight of all your guilt over upon it; believing firmly, that it is sufficient to purge you from all sin; and in this way come forward to the Lord with holy boldness, under the covert of this blood.—Once more, shake off all worldly thoughts and affections; labour to be in a heavenly frame: the nobles left the croud at the foot of the hill, and went up into the mount.

Put

Put off your shoes, when you come on this holy ground.—Still farther, come forward under a due sense of the command of God; they went up because they were called; and so must you from conscience of Christ's command: "Do this in remembrance of me." Labour to have the sense of this command increased upon your spirits, as necessary to produce suitable obedience.—Lastly, open the eyes of faith, and look; the mouth of faith, and eat what is set before your soul there, a slain Saviour, with all his benefits. Amen.

H 3

GOSPEL

III

GOSPEL PRIVILEGES WONDERS OF
GRACE.

S E R M O N LXV.

EXOD. xxiv. 11. *And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the first doctrine taken from these words, we go on to a short illustration of

DOCT. II. That it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, are favoured with special sights of, and an holy familiarity with him, and yet come off safe.

IN speaking to this point, we shall,

I. Shew that it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and to be familiar with him.

II. Shew that it is a wonder that in their solemn approaches, and when they are thus favoured, they yet come off safe.

III.

III. Explain how it comes to pass, that their safety, when thus favoured, is secured.—And then,

IV. Make some short improvement.

WE are,

I. To shew that it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and be familiar with him. We think we need say little for proof of this. Only consider,

1. The infinite distance that there is between God and the creature in respect of perfection. The distance betwixt an angel and a moth is but finite; but betwixt God and us the distance is infinite. And therefore, no wonder that when beholding the glorious perfections of God, we dwindle into nothing in our own eyes, and say with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. "Behold now, we have taken upon us to speak unto the Lord, which are but dust and ashes;" and cry out with Solomon, 1 Kings, viii. 27. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" Remember, ye saints, that though God has laid by his enmity, he retains his sovereignty over us; and therefore it is admirable condescension, that he is pleased to allow us to see him, and to enjoy holy familiarity with him.—Consider,

2. That it is the same God who is such a severe and dreadful avenger of sin: Psal. v. 5. "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Habak. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." This same God who allows his covenant-people a sight of his glory, and a holy familiarity with him on the mount of ordinances,

ces, is he who thrust Adam out of paradise,—drowned the old world,—rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He who gives some the cup of salvation at his table, is the same who makes others of their fellow-creatures drink the wine-cup of his fury. He who makes some feast in his presence, is the same from whose presence others shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

WE are,

II. To show that it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, and when they are thus favoured, come off safe. —This will appear if we consider,

I. The infinite holiness and spotless purity of that God before whom the sinful creature appears. He is glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11. Even angelical purity is dim in his light, and is a sort of impurity, when compared with the infinite holiness of God, Job, xv. 15. Even they are chargeable with folly in his sight; potential folly, (though not actual), a kind of imperfection inseparable from the nature of the creature, in any state whatsoever: Job, iv. 18. "Behold, he put no trust into his servants; and his angels he charged with folly." (Hebrew, He puts, chargeth). And therefore, even the confirmed angels cover their feet with their wings, Isa. vi. 2: as if they would tell us that perfect created holiness is but a dark and smoky light before uncreated holiness. Shining holiness in some of the saints on earth, has a damping power with it. The very sight of one that convincingly walks close with God, is enough to strike a damp on the heart of a loose professor or apostate. How much.

much more may the sight of infinite holiness strike the most spiritual saints to the ground!—Consider,

2. That the best carry a sinful nature even up into the mount with them. Paul, rapt up to the third heavens, brought a sinful nature down with him again, an evidence he had carried it up, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Look on thyself, O saint! in thy nearest approaches, and thou wilt see the humbling sight, a sinful heart, life, and lips, Isa. lxiv. 6.; sin woven into thy very nature, mixed with thy flesh and blood, making a vile body, Phil. iii. 21.; sunk into the marrow of thy spirit, and diffused through thy whole soul. And then canst thou cease to say, as in Lam. iii. 22. “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” Is it not a wonder of grace, that hell, so near heaven, has not sunk with its own weight?—Consider,

3. That sinful creatures never miss to leave the marks of their foul feet, even when they are on holy ground: Rom. vii. 21. “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Peter falls a roving even on the mount, Luke, ix. 33. Even in the greatest light which ever shone about the saints, they never wrote a line so fair, but there was a blot in it. The sacrifices were carried up to the mount with the nobles, for God knew they would need them even there. And if ye will look back to your carriage, when at a communion-table, you will see such mismanagements, as may make you wonder that he laid not his hand upon you.—Consider,

4. The particular jealousy which God has manifested about his worship. Therefore Joshua told the people, chap. xxiv. 19. “Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions, nor
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your sins." And he himself declared, "he would be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified," Lev. x. 3. And upon this he wrote a commentary, with a flaming evidence, in the blood of Nadab and Abihu, even two of these on whom he laid not his hand at this time. A slip in the holy ground is most dangerous and provoking in its own nature. To affront a king in his palace, his presence-chamber, or on his throne, stirs up his anger with a peculiar keenness. How dear did the men of Bethshemesh pay for a look, 1 Sam. vi. 19.; Uzzah, for a touch, 2 Sam. vi. 6. 7.; Annanias and Sapphira, for a word, Acts, v. Now, who is able to stand before the piercing eye of his jealousy? Is it not a wonder of his grace, that the fire of his indignation burns not up sinful creatures in their solemn approaches to him?—Consider,

5. That there is a solemn awfulness about the very ordinances of grace, which the sinner could not bear if he were not supported, Dan, x. 8. 9. —19. Psal. lxxviii. 35. "O God! thou art terrible out of thy holy places." Jacob understood this when he had one of the most comfortable sights which ever mortal had: Gen. xxviii. 17. "And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The very throne of grace stands on justice and judgment, which are its habitation, Psal. lxxxix. 14. (Hebrew, its base); the covenant founded on blood, the blood of his own Son. All our mercies from the throne are dyed red in the blood of a Mediator. Thou canst not have a gracious look from the throne, but through the Redeemer's wounds; nor a pardon, but what is written with his

his blood. So that such sights are sufficient to make one faint away, if they are not supported by grace.—Consider,

Lastly, That the emanations of the divine glory would overwhelm sinners, burst the earthen vessels, if a gracious God did not graciously support them. Some have felt this, when they have been made to cry to the Lord to hold his hand, for that the earthen pitchers were able to hold no more. We know not what spirit we are off. It is our mercy we see but through a glass darkly, and not face to face now; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. xv. 50. The flesh and blood of a giant would not be able to bear that glory now. And therefore, it is observed as an instance of his goodness, Job, xxvi. 9. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it."

WE now go on,

III. To explain how it comes to pass that the safety of God's people, when thus favoured, is secured.—It is so,

1. Because they are God's covenant-people by marriage with his Son. They are married to Christ, and the Son of the Father's bosom is their husband. He has all freedom in his Father's house, and so it cannot be a strange house to them. Where he sits, his spouse may stand safely at his hand: Psal. xlv. 9. "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." They have freedom in the house of God, in the right of their Husband. He has brought them up into his chariot of the covenant; and this has access to drive up into the mount, while it procures all safety to those who are in it, "being paved with love," Song, iii. 9. 10.

2. Because they come up under the covert of
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the Redeemer's blood, Heb. xii. 22.—24. By faith, they have the propitiation, whereby God is atoned, and becomes their friend, Rom. iii. 25. The flesh of a slain Saviour is a sufficient screen from divine wrath, and his red garments form the canopy under which they may safely feast while on the mount.—Their safety is secured,

3. Because God looks on them as in his own Son, and not as in themselves; and so after a sort he overlooks their infirmities: Numb. xxiii. 21. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." He looked on them in Adam, their first representative, and so drove them out of his presence; but now he looks upon them in Christ as their head, and so brings them in again. And, O! but they look fair in him, each one resembles the son of a king. In Jesus they are complete, Colos. ii. 10. Song, iv. 7. "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."—They are safe,

4. Because, though they be unclean creatures, they come up into the mount, to bathe in the fountain opened there, for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. They come to the blood of sprinkling. A physician will not drive away his patient, because his running sores drop in his chamber. I will bear with this, says he, for the poor man is come to get himself healed.—Their safety is secured,

Lastly, Because it is the end of the covenant, to bring them to God. Jacob might well promise himself to see Joseph, when the waggons were come from him for that very end, to bring him to him, Gen. xlv. 27. 28. The covenant looks very low, as low as the earth, to secure the believer's daily bread, Isa. xxxiii. 16. Nay, into the bowels of the earth, to bring forth his dead body, to be raised up and to be glorified in heaven.

mouldered into ashes: "I am the God of Abraham." Nay, as low as hell: "And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell," Psa. lxxxvi. 13. And it looks very high, to bring the believer up into the midst of the mount of enjoyment with God in ordinances, nay, to the top of the mount, to bring them to where the Lord of glory dwells, where they shall see him as he is: Isa. xxxiii. 17. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

It only remains, that,

IV. We make some improvement of this subject.

1. Let us, then, never more think lightly of solemn approaches to God, whether in private or in public ordinances. O! it is sad to think of our rashness in venturing on holy duties, not considering that in these we lift ourselves in the awful presence of God: Eccl. v. 1. "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." Whenever we are to go to God, we should consider where we are going, put off our shoes, for the place is holy. Were we thus frequently exercised, we would have more access to God in our ordinary approaches.

2. Let this commend Christ and the covenant to us, especially to those who stand off from him and his covenant. It is in the Mediator the sinner may meet with God in peace; for Jesus is our peace, Ephes. ii. 14. It is within the bond of the covenant, he is safe from avenging wrath. There is no safety without it, God will be a consuming fire to all who live and die out of Christ and the covenant.

Hearken, ye careless spectators; and be wise at

length. Are you resolved to have no part in Christ and the covenant, that ye keep so far from the place of his feet, and the seal of his covenant.—Consider, you also must come before God. You must die and come before the tribunal. Could you secure yourselves a place to be mere onlookers, when the rest of the world are dying about you; and when the world shall stand before the judgement-seat, then perhaps you might be allowed to be mere spectators on such an occasion as this. But it will not be so. You must take your part with the rest. And what will it be to get the first sight of your Judge then, with whom you might have been accepted, but would not?—Consider, if it be a matter of such awful solemnity to approach the throne of grace, what will it be to stand before the throne of avenging justice? If it be so solemn to come up into mount Zion, where communion is to be had with God in Christ, what will it be to come to mount Sinai, where there is such blackness, darkness, and tempest, as will confound the adversaries of the Lord? Bless not yourselves that you have not gone up into the mount, for monuments of justice you shall be, if you be not thus monuments of grace.—Consider, what madness is it to lift up the heel against God, the weight of whose hand can crush you as a moth. Would it not be your wisdom to lie down among the dust of his feet, to approach him through his Son, and in the way of his covenant, trembling, if so be that he may be pleased to stretch out the golden sceptre, and save your life? Nay, come forward yet, strive to take hold of an offered Christ and covenant. Let not his terrors deter you from him. As the lepers at the gate of Samaria did, so reason ye.

3. Let us praise him for this, that upon us he
has

has not laid his hand; that we have not left a name to the place, Perez, from the Lord's making a breach upon us; but that we may set up a pillar here, and call it Ebenezer. There has been strange fire offered to the Lord here this day; wrong touches given to the ark; unworthy communicating, faithless, fearless, stupid, confused, and hypocritical managements; who dare say they have made no stumble on the mount? The bread and wine in the sacrament have as deep relative holiness as the ark had; but had spectators and communicants been taken up as hot for their profane looking to the one, as the men of Bethshemesh were for their looking to the other, there had been a sad sight among us ere now. Glory be to our gracious God, that on us he hath not laid his hand.

4. Let us long for that day which will put an end to our sinfulness, weakness, and imperfection, when we shall see him as he is, without any danger of sinning or suffering, which is far better, Phil. i. 23. It would be a token for good that we had seen the Lord, if we were now longing for that blessed day.

Lastly, Let us apply ourselves to the duties which a gracious God calls for at our hands.—
And,

1. Is there any among us who have been admitted to an holy familiarity with God? Song, i. 4. Then, — Wonder at the freedom of grace, and be thankful that ever the like of you should have come so far forward: 2 Sam. vii. 18. “Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?”—Double your watch, and walk very softly, being careful to keep your nearness, Song, iii. 5. Isa. xxxviii. 15.—If there be any

special errand to the throne for your yourselves, or for the church of God, as not doubt there is, strike in with this golden opportunity, and lay it before the Lord, Exod. xxxiv. 8. 9.—Beware of being proud of your attainments. There is a hazard here; but when you see your peacock-feathers, remember they are borrowed, and look to your black feet, 2 Cor. xii. 7.—Lay your account with a storm, and be on your guard. If you have got a larger meal than others, it is not unlike you have more to do than they. But accept that kindly, and bless God who is beforehand with you, laying in the provision before he lays on the burden.

2. Is there any among us who have seen the God of Israel? Then walk as becomes those who have beheld his glory. Blessed are your eyes, for they see. But here some may say, Alas! this sight has been withheld from my eyes.—In answer to such, I observe, that some saying this, no doubt speak true; others belie the working of God's grace towards them. Therefore we must put it to the trial; for one may get a sight of Christ, and not know that it is him, John, xx. 14. Luke, xxiv. 16. I ask you, then, what effect on you has the sight which ye have got this day?—Has this day's sight humbled you more, made you more vile and loathsome in your own eyes, filled you with shame and blushing, and self-loathing? It is a sign you have seen the Lord, Job, xlii. 5. 6.—Has it weaned you more from the world, sunk the value of all created excellency with you, made you see through the bulky vanity of the world, that you are resolved you shall feed no more on these husks? Math. xiii. 45. 46. Rev. xii. 1.—Has it made the body of sin and death heavier than it used to be?—May be some of you think, ye have been undone at this communion with an ill heart,

heart, that drew a vail between Christ and you; and now you are crying, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" O to be quit of this burden at any rate! O to be beyond a sinning condition! welcome grim death, so that it would take off the burden. Truly, if it be so, it has been so thin a vail, that you have got a sight of Christ through it, Isa. vi. 5. Luke, ii. 29. 30.—Has it kindled a superlative love in your heart to this unseen Lord? Do ye love him more than all persons and things else? Psal. lxxiii. 25. If it be so, ye have seen him, Luke, xxiv. 32. Sick of love, argues a blink of the face of the lovely one received. Therefore, bless God, and be thankful. It is bastard humility to belie the grace of God. Walk so as the world may take notice that you have seen what they never saw, and have been where their ungracious feet never carried them. And shew this in personal and relative holiness, Acts, iv. 13. Commend the way of God to others. Tell them it is good to be on the mount. Speak good of God's house, and give it your testimony, before despisers of Christ and ordinances; especially before poor discouraged sinners, those who desert ordinances, alledging God is not to be found in them.—Finally, quench not the Spirit, cherish his motions, and follow on to know the Lord.

3. Ye who have made this solemn approach, but really have not seen the Lord, set ye about your proper duty.—Search out, mourn over the cause of this, and quickly flee to the blood of Christ for its removal. You have not seen the Lord; and is there not a cause? yes, sure he has a quarrel with you, and therefore has withdrawn himself.—Seek it out. The fault has been either in your state, that you are yet in the gall of bitter-

ness and bond of iniquity. This is a fundamental mistake.—Or it has been in your frame. Either you have not been at pains to prepare, or have sit down on your preparation; or some idol of jealousy has been nourished:—or it has been in your faithless management. Wonder ye in a special manner, that ye have come off safe, and that upon you the Lord has not laid his hand. Do not fret that you are come off with nothing; but, O bless him that you are come off at all!

Lafily, Go back to the throne with all speed. Though the communion-table be drawn here, it is not yet drawn to you in heaven: Joel, iii. 21. “For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.” Follow on to know the Lord. Be not like the mixed multitude, who, disappointed of the milk and honey of Canaan, would needs go back to the onions and the garlic in Egypt. If you do so, his soul will abhor you: Heb. x. 38. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”—Say not, I will never see the Lord now: For, wherefore has he spared you, but that you might have occasion to have your marred work amended? And if ye wait long on, wonder not, it is a mercy ye have access to wait on. Lay down that resolution in Lam. iii. 49. 50. “Mine eye tricketh down, and ceaseth not, without intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven;” and in Isa. viii. 17. “I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.” Amen.

GOD NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED HIS
PEOPLE'S GOD *.

SERMON LXVI.

HEB. xi. 16. *Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for he hath prepared for them a city.*

GOD has a peculiar people in the world, though these are few in number. Satan is called the god of this world ; and indeed is so, in regard the greater part of the world, even the whole natives of the weary land, are his. But there is a select company, who are in, but not of the world ; a people of a peculiar character, who are strangers and pilgrims in the earth ; whose heads and hearts are towards the better country.—In the text we have their peculiar privilege, *God is not ashamed to be called their God.* More is implied than is here said. God, who is the God of the whole earth, is their God in a peculiar manner, by a special covenant-relation ; and he will own it before all the world, however they be despised by them. They are savingly interested in him, and he is peculiarly interested in them. As they are not

* Delivered October 1722.

not ashamed to be called his people, unless it be for this, that they do not look more like him; so he is not ashamed to be called their God. (Greek, to be surnamed).

There are two things which make men ashamed to own a relation; one upon the part of their relatives, another upon their own part. But neither are in this case.

1. He is not ashamed on their part, to be called their God. He is not ashamed of them, (as the Greek text bears expressly), as men sometimes are of their relations because of their scandalous character, and as our Lord says he will be ashamed of some, so as that he will not own them, Mark, viii. 38. The reason of this is intimated in the text, in the particle *wherefore*, which leads us back to the character of those who are indeed God's people, exemplified in Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, ver. 13.—16. The sum of it lies here: That upon the faith of God's promise of a better world, they forsook this world, and went through it even to the grave, as persons not come to the place where they expected and desired to settle. Wherefore, since they forsook this world for God, and trusted him for a better inheritance to themselves, and, upon the faith of his promise, were easy in all their wanderings and hardships, God is not ashamed of them to be called their God: Exod. iii. 6. "I am," said he, "the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In these steps all the true children of Abraham walk.

2. He is not ashamed on his own part, to be called their God; as men are ashamed, when they have no suitable entertainment to give those who have left all others for them, and depend entirely upon them. For he has prepared for them a city.

city. These patriarchs dwelt in tents, and went from land to land at God's call; but a city, even the New Jerusalem, heaven itself, was prepared for them by their God; a city suitable to his dignity; a city, the like of which all the world could not have furnished them. He is not ashamed to be called his people's God, whatever hardships they suffer for his sake; for he has enough to make up their losses, ready for them. He would reckon it a stain on his honour, that any of them should be losers at his hand; if he should not fully answer the trust they put in him; if he did not give them as good, nay, better than the best thing which they ever were denied for his sake.—From this subject, we observe the following doctrines, viz.

DOCT. I. That however mean and low those be who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better, God is not ashamed of them, or on their part, to be called their God.

DOCT. II. That whatever hardships they may suffer for his sake, he is not ashamed on his part to be called their God, having prepared for them a heavenly city, which will make up for all their losses.—These we shall shortly illustrate in their order.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That however mean and low those be who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better, God is not ashamed of them, or on their part, to be called their God.

We shall here,

- I. Explain the import of this their privilege.
- II. Give the reasons of the point. And then,
- III. Improve it.

WE

WE are then, -

I. To explain the import of this their privilege.—It imports,

1. That he is their God, how mean soever their lot be. Whatever they want, they have him for their God: Heb. viii. 10. "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

The patriarchs had a wandering life of it in the world, were always pilgrims and strangers, they could never count themselves at home, while in the world. But whatever they wanted, they had a God in Christ for their own God. O! ye who are coming away from Lebanon, forsaking this world for God, breathing and panting for the better world, assure yourselves, he is your God, by this good token, that the heart of man will never in this case loose one foot till it has another fastened, never quit the present world till it be possessed of a God to fill up its room. It will never let go the grip the one hand has of this world, till it has a believing grip of a God in Christ with the other. Hence believing is compared to buying, where the man will not part with his money, till the commodity, which for the time is better to him than money, is made over to him. So, though ye were reduced to this, that ye could not tell carnal Israel's tale, Hosea, ii. 5. "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink;" yet ye may tell David's tale, a far better one: Psal. xviii. 2. "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust: my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."—Here some may propose this

Question, But what can persons make of this
in

in the want of earthly enjoyments? We answer, They may make all of it that is necessary to full satisfaction and contentment of heart, Habak. iii. 17. 18. Full protection, full provision, for time and eternity, there is nothing more can be needed: Psal. cxlii. 5. "I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living."—It imports,

2. That he takes such a pleasure in them, and puts such an honour on them, that though the world should cast out their name as evil, he surnames himself by them, and brings their name into his. Hundreds of times, the expressions, "The Lord thy God," "The Lord your God," occur in scripture, applied to God with respect to his people. Yea, he bears up their name in his, when they are dead and gone out of the world, since they still live unto him: Matth. xvii. 32. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This is a memorial of them that will last, when the monuments and marble tombs will not keep the memory of the wicked from rotting.—It imports,

3. That he allows them to call him their own God: John, xx. 28. "And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord, and my God." They can say this, how little soever they have in the world which they can call theirs. Why should they not call him by his own name? The Lord their God is the name he has taken to himself; a plain indication of his being pleased to be called by this name.—It imports,

4. That he allows them to depend on him as their God, and to improve their relation to him for all which they need; whoever casts them off, or refuses to help them, God will never put off his
people

people with names, without the things signified by these names. If he is called their God, he will own his name in effect and reality; and indeed be a God to them, to all the intents and purposes of the covenant: Gen. xvii. 7. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." They may look for all which they need from him, and are welcome to a fill of the fulness of God: whatever their case requires, this God will be all in all to them. Hence the expectation of faith: Psal. xxvii. 10. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."—It imports,

5. That he will own himself to be their God before the world, whoever disown them. He is content that strangers call him by this name, as Nebuchadnezzar did, Dan. iii. 29.; and Darius, chap. vi. 16. He puts marks of his respect and relation to them upon them before the world, so that the world shall be obliged to take notice of his owning them: Rev. iii. 9. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, (which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie); behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." If their corruptions will not suffer them to acknowledge so much, yet their consciences shall not get it refused. Hence David prays, Psal. lxxxvi. 17. "Shew me a token, for good, that they which hate me may see and be ashamed, because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me."—It imports,

Lastly, That he reckons it his honour to be their God, even though men should be ashamed to rub shoulders with them. Accordingly we find

and him call them his glory: Isa. xlv. 13. "And I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." And in 2 Cor. viii. 23. they are called the glory of Christ. He glories in his special interest in them, and takes a pleasure to come over it: Song, viii. 12. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

WE are now,

II. To give the reasons of the point. Among other reasons, there are the following.

1. Because they have embraced him in the covenant, for their all, in opposition to the world, and all that is therein; which shows a nobleness of spirit in them, the certain product of his own Spirit: Psal. iv. 6. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire besides thee." There are two offers made to every one of us: God says, "I will be thy God," the world says, 'I will be thy God.' Most men fall in with the world's offer, and all men naturally incline this way. But these noble souls, as partakers of the divine nature, pour contempt on the clay idol, God's rival, refusing it; and honour him by believing and embracing his offer; so that when the Lord says in the gospel to the man, "I will be thy God," his soul echoes back again, 'Then thou art mine, my God, my portion: I take possession upon the credit of thine own offer.' Psal. cxlii. 5. "I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land

of the living." Thus he is not ashamed to be called their God.

2. Because they quit the world's certainty for divine hope, and trust him for an unseen portion to themselves, as preferable to all that the world can afford, believing he will glorify his all-sufficiency and his faithfulness in the promise, laying all their weight upon them: Rom. iv. 20. 21. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform." Such a trust they have in God, else they would never forsake the world; for plain it is, according to the measure of the belief of a better world to one's self, so is their forsaking the present world. And since they thus honourably trust him for their all, he is not ashamed to be called their God.

3. Because they can take up with nothing less than a God for their portion, by which they discover a peculiar elevation of spirit, the effect of divine grace: Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." They can no longer feed with the prodigal upon the husks of the empty creation. Their soul's cry is, 'Give me a God in Christ, or else I die.' All the world, nay, a thousand worlds, cannot fill up his room: Song, viii. 6. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." And so they press forward through temptations, and the greatest danger which the world

world can lay before them, to hold him as their portion, and to come to the full enjoyment of him. Song, viii. 7. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." So he is not ashamed to be called their God, because they thus love and desire him.

4. Because, in their way and walk, they are of a distinguished character from the men of the world, Phil. iii. 18.—21. They dare not take the way of the world, their souls hate it, as being opposite to the manners of the country to which they are going. Therefore they are nonconformists to the world, in so far as it is disconformed to the way of the Lord.

WE shall now,

III. Improve this point.—Hence see,

1. That carnal worldlings are none of those whose God the Lord is, Matth. vi. 24. Those whose hearts are not loosed from the present evil world, are not brought within the bond of the covenant, and have no right before the Lord to the sacrament, which is the seal of it. He would be ashamed to be called their God, who make that clay idol their God. I offer two evidences of this disposition.—(1.) When it is the world, and not God himself, which has the chief room in men's hearts and affections: Matth. vi. 21. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Consider what it is, whether God or the world, which your hearts do most desire, and are most set upon, Psal. iv. 6. (quoted above). What it is your chief joy lies in, in the enjoyment of God, or the enjoyment of the world. Whether your chief sorrow arises from crosses in the

world, or from sin that offends God, or from the hidings of his face?—(2.) When the heart can never rest in God, but must still have its rest in the creature; or no rest for it at all: and so the man's life of comfort just depends on the smiles or frowns of the present world, not upon the having or wanting the favour of God, his smiles or frowns. Perhaps the man might find a rest betwixt God and the world, but no rest of the heart in God alone, Luke, xiv. 26.—Hence see,

2. That such as having weighed all things, have forsaken the world for God, and fixed their desires on him and the better world, intent to be there whatever their lot in this world be; and to enjoy God in Christ as their God and portion, however small their portion be of this world's good things: they may be sure God is their God, and he will own it, though, by reason of the weakness of their faith, they have much ado to plead it. They may come to the communion-table, and fully assure their hearts of it, by the seal of the covenant, which he has provided for this purpose, to show that he is not ashamed to be called their God. It is the pilgrim's table.—Learn,

3. That God is worthy to be chosen for our God in covenant; and therefore I exhort you to make choice of him for your all, and give up with the world henceforth, that ye may be pilgrims and strangers in it.—To prevail with you as to this, consider,

(1.) He is content to take in outcasts: Pf. cxlvii.

2. "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth the outcasts of Israel." Never do any seek after a God in Christ for their God in earnest, till such time as they see there is no satisfaction for them to be had in the creature. Thus they find

find they need a God. The gospel discovers God's offer to be their God, and grace determines them to chuse him for their God. And they are not rejected, because they came not till their need drove them; but are welcome, since they came on the discovery of their need.

(2.) Consider, he is a fast friend, and forsakes not on any emergency whatever. If you take him for your God, and forsake the world, he will stand by you at all times, and own you, though all the world should forsake and disown you. O! have you not need of such a friend?

(3.) Does not the world reward your love with hatred in many instances? How often is your rest in it disturbed! O take God for your God this day, and you thus make the best exchange, of a changeable world for the unchangeable God.

Lastly, If you continue to forsake God for this world, the time will come when the world will fail you, and you will not have a God to own you, and so will be absolutely helpless. He offers himself to you in the covenant. Believe and embrace him this day. Give up with the world, and all things in it. Take him for all in time and through eternity, as an upmaking portion. —We now go on to a short illustration of

DOCTRINE II. That whatever hardships his people may suffer for his sake, he is not ashamed on his part to be called their God, having prepared for them the heavenly city, which will make up all losses. —We are not here to launch out into the consideration of heaven under a notion of a city; but only shall,

I. SHEW in what respects the heavenly city is prepared

prepared for the pilgrims, who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better.

II. Lay before you the reasons of the point. And then,

III. Make some improvement.

WE are then,

I. To shew in what respects the heavenly city is prepared for the pilgrims who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better.—It is prepared,

i. In respect of eternal destination in the decree of election before the world was made: Mat. xxv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Their forsaking of the world in time, is an evidence and fruit of their election from eternity. Their being called out of, and separated from the world lying in wickedness, is owing to that eternal free-love, which in the decree separated them from the rest of the corrupt mass of mankind. The seal of God upon them from everlasting, though undiscernible till the day of their conversion, is the cause of their departing from the tents of wickedness: 2 Tim. ii. 19. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."—It is prepared,

2. In respect of purchase, by the sufferings and death of Christ. It is therefore called the purchased possession, Ephes. i. 13. And the price of the purchase is his blood, Acts, xx. 28. "To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Eternal happiness is the proper reward of Christ's works, not of ours. It had

had been in vain for any of the children of Adam to have looked for a better country than this world, had not the Lord Jesus, by his obedience and death, bought it for them. None of the pilgrims had ever got footing there, had it not become the land of our Immanuel by his own purchase.—It is prepared,

3. In respect of possession taken of it already in their name, by our Lord Jesus his entering into it, as a public person, at his ascension: Heb. vi. 20. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." As Christ died in their name, and so they died in him, the law having them all legally on the cross, when it had him there; therefore it is said, "They are crucified with Christ," Gal. ii. 20.; so he rose again, and ascended into heaven, and took possession of it in their name. Thus they are actually and really, though not in their persons, but in the person of Christ, possessed of the city already: Ephes. ii. 6. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This Christ himself told to be his errand in going away: John, xiv. 2. "I go," said he, "to prepare a place for you."—It is prepared,

4. In respect of readiness to receive them in their own persons. They are made habitually ready for it, in respect of their state of justification and sanctification: Col. i. 12. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And it is ready for them, of which we have two evidences.

(1.) A new gate is erected, and opened for their entry into the city. It may be called the pilgrims gate, to distinguish it from that of the natives of the city. See it, Heb. x. 19. 20. "Having

ving therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." All the pilgrims enter by it, and it was erected purposely for them. And it is always open, never shut: Rev. xxi. 25. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

(2.) The notice is already there before them, that they are coming. 'The King's Son has carried it thither: John, xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And this his efficacious intercession removes all lets or hindrances out of the way.

WE are now,

II. To give the reasons of the point.—I take them up in these four.

I. Because the happiness of the city, if they were once come there, will more than balance all the hardships in their pilgrimage that they had to undergo for his sake. Why should he be ashamed to be called their God, be their lot in the world as bad as it can be? The glory of the city will more than balance all the contempt, reproach, and disgrace cast on them for his sake. He will not be in their debt for lying among the pots on his account. The glory of the city will make them whiter than ever the world could make them black, Psal lxviii. 13. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The rest of the city will more than balance all that toil, pain, weary work, in doing or suffering
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ing which they had for God in the weary land. What though it cost them many a weary step ere they get thither? If they were there, it will all be forgotten. Then they will for ever rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. Abraham's bosom will make the weary body and languid spirit fresh for evermore. The riches of the city will more than balance all their wants and losses in this world, even though they should lose their very lives in the cause. Whatever their wants are now, there is enough before them in the city above. And God has more, ten thousand times more to give them, than they can lose for him: Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The eternity of the city, and all that is in it, will more than balance the continuance of their hardships in this world, to whatever length holy Providence sees meet to spin them out: 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." However dark and long their night be, that morning cometh which will never be succeeded by another night.

2. Because they are not far from the city: They will soon be there: Psal. xc. 10. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." They are within a hand-breadth of the city, Psal. xxxix. 5. It is but through the wilderness, over Jordan, and they are at it. And they cannot complain then, they are so near home, however harsh their entertainment be in the way.

3. Because in the mean time there is a communication betwixt them and this city, so that
the

the whole of what they need may come from it. Pilgrims need never go to the world's door. They always may have provision from this city for their wilderness-journey. Though the Israelites could neither have provision and supply from Egypt, nor Canaan, while they were in the wilderness, they wanted not, they got it from heaven.

Lastly, Because the very faith and hope which they entertain as to this city, is sufficient to support them under all their hardships, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18. Faith believing the word of promise, and hope waiting for its accomplishment, bring down heaven to them till they go up to it: Heb. ix. 1. "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Rom. viii. 24. "For we are saved by hope." Thus there is no reason he should be ashamed on his part to be called their God.

WE now come,

III. To improve this point.—It serves,

First, To pour shame on the wisdom and way of the world. And this,

1. In that they reckon it wisdom, not to quit a seen advantage for an unseen one, certainty (as they call it) for hope: Psal. iv. 6. "Who will shew us any good?" Therefore they embrace the present world, tack about, and sail with every wind; making the way of the world, and their own ease, the mark by which to steer their compass, rather than the word and glory of God, and the dictates of conscience, according to the word. When they have done this, they reckon they have done wisely: Hosea, xii. 7. 8. "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance."

But

But either this is brutish folly, or God may be ashamed to be called the God of pilgrims in this world, who take quite another way, and look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 18. But God is not ashamed of pilgrims, therefore the men of the world are fools: and they will be seen to be so with a witness; for God's promise is better than the world's hand-payment.—It pours shame upon the wisdom of the world,

2. In that they are ready to be ashamed of God's people, because of the hardships they are laid under in their pilgrimage through the world. This their way is their folly; for whatever their lot be, God is not their God and portion. The world's esteem is little worth, but Heaven's esteem of the saints never alters, whatever alterations may be in their outward condition.—This point,

Secondly, Serves to instruct in several duties, those who profess to be pilgrims in the world, and to have taken God for their God, looking for a better world.—Such as,

1. Be not ashamed of him, to be called his people: Mark, viii. 38. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Be not ashamed to own him and avouch him to be your God. Whatever bears his image and the stamp of his authority, cleave to it confidently. Be not ashamed of any of his truths, ways, ordinances, whatever may be thought of them by the world; for worldly men are not the proper judges of these things, and cannot discern their real worth.

2. Be not ye a shame and dishonour to him, by
your

your cleaving to the world, and the way of the world: Rom. ii. 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." Remember, it is they who forsake the world, whom God is not ashamed to be called their God. If you go back again to your former lusts, you blot out your name out of that number, and rank yourselves among those who have their portion in this life. If he be your God, cast not dishonour on him, by hanging on about the door of the world, and your lusts, like them who have no other God to depend on. If you make as little conscience of your thoughts, your words, your actions, and dealings with God or man, as the men of the world do, for all your profession, God will do with you as a man with burs which stick to his cloaths, he plucks them off, and casts them into the fire.

3. Do not decline the hardest piece of the doing-work of religion for him. Engage in the whole without exception. Have respect to all his commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. The internal duties of religion must by all means be done by you, at the same time leave not the external undone. Mortification of your lusts, and watchings against them, in the faith of the promise, should be your daily work; and stick not at cutting off right-hands, and plucking out right-eye sins. All this is but a very small thing in comparison of what he has prepared for you: Rom. viii. 13. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

4. Shift not the cross of Christ, but be ready to suffer for him as he may call you: 2 Tim. ii. 12. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he will also deny us." No Christian

stian sufferers for him shall ever be losers by him, lose what they will in the world. Narrow not your notion of suffering for Christ, to suffering of violence by persecutors. But remember, that though it may come to this, that you must either sin or have to suffer some hardships to keep your conscience clean, (and this you may meet with in the most peaceable times of the church); yet then the Lord calls you to suffer for him. And suffering hardships for your adherence to any duty of the ten commandments, out of love to God and his holy law, is as really suffering for Christ, as if you laid down your liberty or life in defence of the articles of your faith.

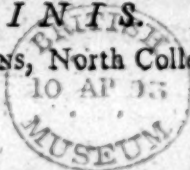
5. Walk like the expectants of heaven, citizens of the city above prepared for you by your God. This city will far more than compensate for your sufferings, for all the difficult and hard steps ye may have in your way thither.—Live by faith, and keep the promise in your eye;—the promise respecting the end of your journey, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which awaits you, 2 Cor. iv. 17.;—the promise respecting your throughbearing by the way: 2 Cor. xii. 9. “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Carry meekly and patiently under all the hardships of the weary land, like the followers of Christ. Men do not fret and vex themselves, because the midges flee about them, when they travel in a hot summer-day. Christians need be as little surprised that they meet with one rub after another in the way through this wilderness; and because they may be of long continuance, Christians should arm themselves with patience in the faith of a better world: Col. iii. 15. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful.” Be resolute

to get through, and never to make truce with the world, come what will come, but press forward in the way of duty over all impediments, where the Lord points out your way: Matth. xi. 12. "And from the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—Carry chearfully and courageously, as knowing better times are coming: Heb. x. 34. "For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Lastly, Spend the time of your sojourning in making ready and preparing for that city which the Lord has prepared for his people: Rev. xix. 7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. There was much cost and pains at preparing it for them: no wonder that pains be necessary in them to make ready for it. All the Lord's people are habitually, in respect of their state, prepared for heaven: but what they have to do is, to get themselves prepared actually, in respect of their frame; therefore labour to be dying daily to this world, and to get you hearts more and more weaned from it; that ye may be like ripe corn forsaking the ground.—Cherish quick and vigorous longings to be rid of the body of sin and death: maintain the battle against heart-corruptions constantly; and this will make you long for deliverance. Be watchful, as not knowing when your Lord cometh.—In a word, be much conversant in this city; solace yourselves with believing prospects of it; and see that your heart be there, for there unquestionably your heart must be where your treasure is, Col. iii. 1.—5. Amen.

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